

HIS LOVE STORY

MARIE VAN VORST





HIS LOVE STORY





— Harold G. Christy, 1912



HIS LOVE STORY

By
MARIE VAN VORST

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First Love, The Girl From His Town
The Broken Bell, etc.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY
HOWARD CHANDLER CHRISTY



NEW YORK
GROSSET & DUNLAP
PUBLISHERS

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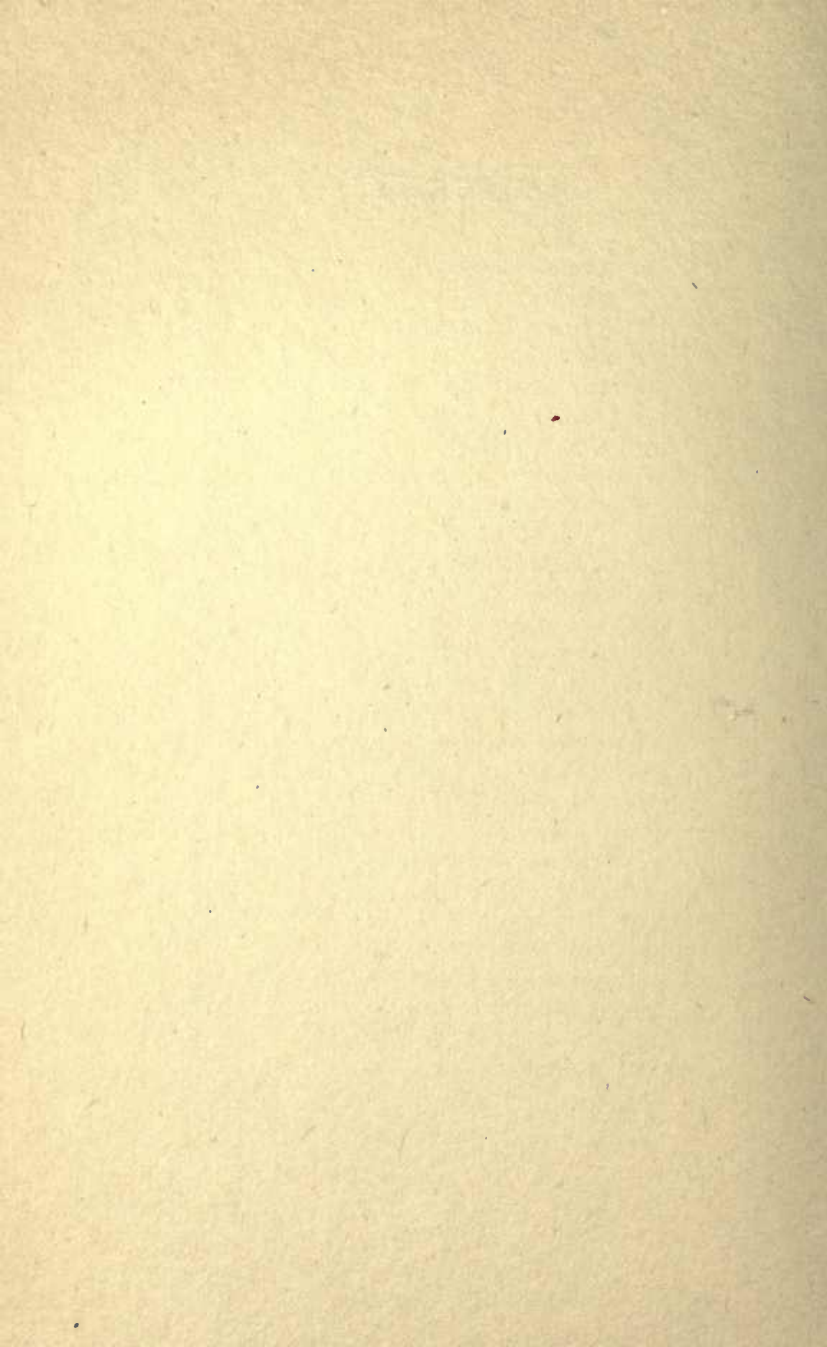
Monsieur le Capitaine Dadvisard
de la Cavalerie Française

Paris, 1912

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HIS LOVE STORY

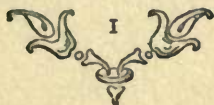
CHAPTER I

A SERIOUS EVENT

LE COMTE DE SABRON, in the undress uniform of captain in the ——— Cavalry, sat smoking and thinking. . . . What is the use of being thirty years old with the brevet of captain and much distinction of family if you are a poor man—in short, what is the good of anything if you are alone in the world and no one cares what becomes of you?

He rang his bell, and when his *ordonnance* appeared, said sharply:

“*Que diable* is the noise in the stable, Brunet? Don’t you know that when I





smoke at this hour all Tarascon must be kept utterly silent?"

Tarascon is never silent. No French meridional town is, especially in the warm sunlight of a glorious May day.

"The noise, *mon Capitaine*," said Brunet, "is rather melancholy."

"Melancholy!" exclaimed the young officer. "It's infernal. Stop it at once."

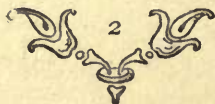
The *ordonnance* held his kepi in his hand. He had a round good-natured face and kind gray eyes that were used to twinkle at his master's humor and caprices.

"I beg pardon, *mon Capitaine*, but a very serious event is taking place."

"It will be more serious yet, Brunet, if you don't keep things quiet."

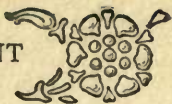
"I am sorry to tell, *mon Capitaine*, that Michette has just died."

"Michette!" exclaimed the master.





A SERIOUS EVENT



"What relation is she of yours, Brunet?"

"Ah, *mon Capitaine*," grinned the *ordonnance*, "relation! None! It is the little terrier that Monsieur le Capitaine may have remarked now and then in the garden."

Sabron nodded and took his cigarette out of his mouth as though in respect for the deceased.

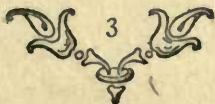
"Ah, yes," he said, "*that* melancholy little dog! Well, Brunet!"

"She has just breathed her last, *mon Capitaine*, and she is leaving behind her rather a large family."

"I am not surprised," said the officer.

"There are six," vouchsafed Brunet, "of which, if *mon Capitaine* is willing, I should like to keep one."

"Nonsense," said Sabron, "on no account. You know perfectly well, Brunet, that I don't surround myself with things





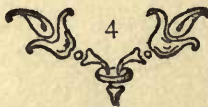
HIS LOVE STORY

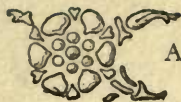


that can make me suffer. I have not kept a dog in ten years. I try not to care about my horses even. Everything to which I attach myself dies or causes me regret and pain. And I won't have any miserable little puppy to complicate existence."

"*Bien, mon Capitaine,*" accepted the *ordonnance* tranquilly. "I have given away five. The sixth is in the stable; if Monsieur le Capitaine would come down and look at it. . . ."

Sabron rose, threw his cigarette away and, following across the garden in the bland May light, went into the stable where Madame Michette, a small wire-haired Irish terrier had given birth to a fine family and herself gone the way of those who do their duty to a race. In the straw at his feet Sabron saw a rat-like, unprepossessing little object, crawling about feebly in search of warmth and





A SERIOUS EVENT



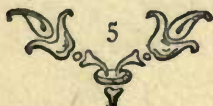
nourishment, uttering pitiful little cries. Its extreme loneliness and helplessness touched the big soldier, who said curtly to his man:

“Wrap it up, and if you don’t know how to feed it I should not be surprised if I could induce it to take a little warm milk from a quill. At all events we shall have a try with it. Fetch it along to my rooms.”

And as he retraced his steps, leaving his order to be executed, he thought to himself: The little beggar is not much more alone in the world than I am! As he said that he recalled a word in the meridional patois: *Pitchouné*, which means “poor little thing.”

“I shall call it *Pitchouné*,” he thought, “and we shall see if it can’t do better than its name suggests.”

He went slowly back to his rooms and

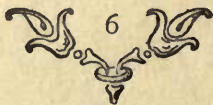


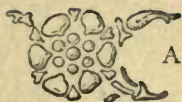


busied himself at his table with his correspondence. Among the letters was an invitation from the Marquise d'Esclignac, an American married to a Frenchman, and the great lady of the country thereabouts.

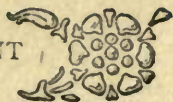
"Will you not," she wrote, "come to dine with us on Sunday? I have my niece with me. She would be glad to see a French soldier. She has expressed such a wish. She comes from a country where soldiers are rare. We dine at eight."

Sabron looked at the letter and its fine clear handwriting. Its wording was less formal than a French invitation is likely to be, and it gave him a sense of cordiality. He had seen, during his rides, the beautiful lines of the Château d'Esclignac. Its turrets surely looked upon the Rhone. There would be a divine view from the terraces. It would be a pleasure





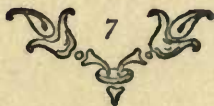
A SERIOUS EVENT



to go there. He thought more of what the place would be than of the people in it, for he was something of a hermit, rather a recluse, and very reserved.

He was writing a line of acceptance when Brunet came in, a tiny bundle in his hand.

“Put Pitchouné over there in the sunlight,” ordered the officer, “and we shall see if we can bring him up by hand.”

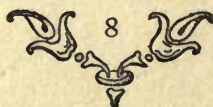


CHAPTER II

JULIA REDMOND

HE REMEMBERED all his life the first dinner at the Château d'Esclignac, where from the terrace he saw the Rhone lying under the early moonlight and the shadows falling around the castle of good King René.

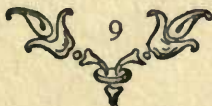
As he passed in, his sword clanking—for he went in full dress uniform to dine with the Marquise d'Esclignac—he saw the picture the two ladies made in their drawing-room: the marquise in a very splendid dress (which he never could remember) and her niece, a young lady from a country whose name it took him long to learn to pronounce, in a dress so simple that of course he never could for-

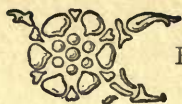




get it! He remembered for a great many years the fall of the ribbon at her pretty waist, the bunch of sweet peas at her girdle, and he always remembered the face that made the charm of the picture.

Their welcome to him was gracious. The American girl spoke French with an accent that Sabron thought bewilderingly charming, and he put aside some of his reserve and laughed and talked at his ease. After dinner (this he remembered with peculiar distinctness) Miss Redmond sang for him, and although he understood none of the words of the English ballad, he learned the melody by heart and it followed with him when he left. It went with him as he crossed the terrace into the moonlight to mount his horse; it went home with him; he hummed it, and when he got up to his room he hummed it again as he bent over the little roll of

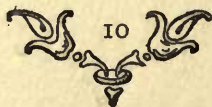


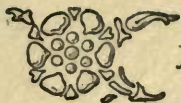


flannel in the corner and fed the puppy hot milk from a quill.

This was a painstaking operation and required patience and delicacy, both of which the big man had at his finger-tips. The tune of Miss Redmond's song did for a lullaby and the puppy fell comfortably to sleep while Sabron kept the picture of his evening's outing contentedly in his mind. But later he discovered that he was not so contented, and counted the hours when he might return.

He shortly made a call at the Château d'Esclignac with the result that he had a new picture to add to his collection. This time it was the picture of a lady alone; the Marquise d'Esclignac doing tapestry. While Sabron found that he had grown reticent again, he listened for another step and another voice and heard nothing; but before he took leave there





was a hint of a second invitation to dinner.

The marquise was very handsome that afternoon and wore yet another bewildering dress. Sabron's simple taste was dazzled. Nevertheless, she made a graceful picture, one of beauty and refinement, and the young soldier took it away with him. As his horse began to trot, at the end of the alley, near the poplars at the lower end of the rose terrace he caught a glimpse of a white dress (undoubtedly a simpler dress than that worn by Madame d'Esclignac).



CHAPTER III

A SECOND INVITATION

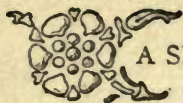
“**I** DON'T think, *mon Capitaine*, that it is any use,” Brunet told his master.

Sabron, in his shirt-sleeves, sat before a table on which, in a basket, lay Michette's only surviving puppy. It was a month old. Sabron already knew how bright its eyes were and how alluring its young ways.

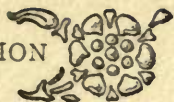
“Be still, Brunet,” commanded the officer. “You do not come from the south or you would be more sanguine. Pitchouné has *got* to live.”

The puppy's clumsy adventuresome feet had taken him as far as the highroad, and on this day, as it were in order that he





A SECOND INVITATION



should understand the struggle for existence, a bicycle had cut him down in the prime of his youth, and now, according to Brunet, "there wasn't much use!"

Pitchouné was bandaged around his hind quarters and his adorable little head and forepaws came out of the handkerchief bandage.

"He won't eat anything from me, *mon Capitaine*," said Brunet, and Sabron ceremoniously opened the puppy's mouth and thrust down a dose. Pitchouné swallowed obediently.

Sabron had just returned from a long hard day with his troops, and tired out as he was, he forced himself to give his attention to Pitchouné. A second invitation to dinner lay on his table; he had counted the days until this night. It seemed too good to be true, he thought, that another picture was to add itself to

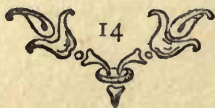


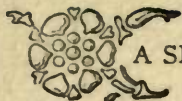
his collection! He had mentally enjoyed the others often, giving preference to the first, when he dined at the château; but there had been a thrill in the second caused by the fluttering of the white dress down by the poplar walk.

To-night he would have the pleasure of taking in Miss Redmond to dinner.

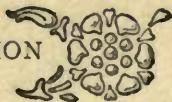
"See, *mon Capitaine*," said Brunet, "the poor little fellow can't swallow it."

The water trickled out from either side of Pitchouné's mouth. The sturdy terrier refused milk in all forms, had done so since Sabron weaned him; but Sabron now returned to his nursery days, made Brunet fetch him warm milk and, taking the quill, dropped a few drops of the soothing liquid, into which he put a dash of brandy, down Pitchouné's throat. Pitchouné swallowed, got the drink down, gave a feeble yelp, and closed his eyes.





A SECOND INVITATION



When he opened them the glazed look had gone.

The officer hurried into his evening clothes and ordered Brunet, as he tied his cravat, to feed the puppy a little of the stimulant every hour until he should return. Pitchouné's eyes, now open, followed his handsome master to the door. As Sabron opened it he gave a pathetic yelp which made the *capitaine* turn about.

"Believe me, *mon Capitaine*," said the *ordonnance* with melancholy fatality, "it is no use. If I am left with Pitchouné it will be to see him die. I know his spirit, *mon Capitaine*. He lives for you alone."

"Nonsense," said the young officer impatiently, drawing on his gloves.

Pitchouné gave a plaintive wail from the bandages and tried to stir.

"As for feeding him, *mon Capitaine*,"

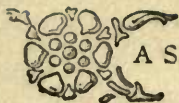


the *ordonnance* threw up his hands, "he will be stiff by the time . . ."

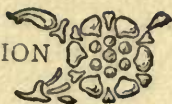
But Sabron was half-way down the stairs. The door was open, and on the porch he heard distinctly a third tenderly pathetic wail.

.

That evening the Marquise d'Esclignac read aloud to her niece the news that the Count de Sabron was not coming to dinner. He was "absolutely desolated" and had no words to express his regret and disappointment. The pleasure of dining with them both, a pleasure to which he had looked forward for a fortnight, must be renounced because he was obliged to sit up with a very sick friend, as there was no one else to take his place. In expressing his undying devotion and his renewed excuses he put his homage at their feet and kissed their hands.



A SECOND INVITATION



The Marquise d'Esclignac, wearing another very beautiful dress, looked up at her niece, who was playing at the piano.

"A very poor excuse, my dear Julia, and a *very* late one."

"It sounds true, however. I believe him, don't you, *ma tante*?"

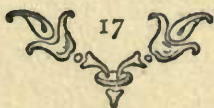
"I do *not*," said the marquise emphatically. "A Frenchman of good education is not supposed to refuse a dinner invitation an hour before he is expected. Nothing but a case of life and death would excuse it."

"He says a 'very sick friend.'"

"Nonsense," exclaimed the marquise.

Miss Redmond played a few bars of the tune Sabron had hummed and which more than once had soothed Pitchouné, and which, did she know, Sabron was actually humming at that moment.

"I am rather disappointed," said the





young girl, "but if we find it is a matter of life and death, *ma tante*, we will forgive him?"

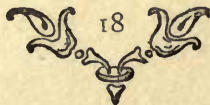
The Marquise d'Esclignac had invited the Count de Sabron because she had been asked to do so by his colonel, who was an old and valued friend. She had other plans for her niece.

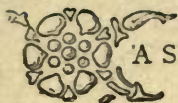
"I feel, my dear," she answered her now, "quite safe in promising that if it is a question of life and death we shall forgive him. I shall see his colonel tomorrow and ask him pointblank."

Miss Redmond rose from the piano and came over to her aunt, for dinner had been announced.

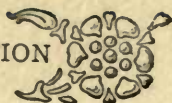
"Well, what do you think," she slipped her hand in her aunt's arm, "really, what do you think *could* be the reason?"

"Please don't ask me," exclaimed the Marquise d'Esclignac impatiently. "The





A SECOND INVITATION



reasons for young men's caprices are sometimes just as well not inquired into."

If Sabron, smoking in his bachelor quarters, lonely and disappointed, watching with an extraordinary fidelity by his "sick friend," could have seen the two ladies at their grand solitary dinner, his unfilled place between them, he might have felt the picture charming enough to have added to his collection.

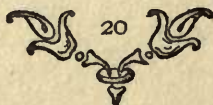
CHAPTER IV.

THE DOG PAYS

PITCHOUNE repaid what was given him.

He did not think that by getting well, reserving the right for the rest of his life to a distinguished limp in his right leg, that he had done all that was expected of him. He developed an ecstatic devotion to the captain, impossible for any human heart adequately to return. He followed Sabron like a shadow and when he could not follow him, took his place on a chair in the window, there to sit, his sharp profile against the light, his pointed ears forward, watching for the uniform he knew and admired extravagantly.

Pitchouné was a thoroughbred, and





every muscle and fiber showed it, every hair and point asserted it, and he loved as only thoroughbreds can. You may say what you like about mongrel attachments, the thoroughbred in all cases reserves his brilliancy for crises.

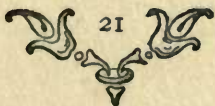
Sabron, who had only seen Miss Redmond twice and thought about her countless times, never quite forgave his friend for the illness that kept him from the château. There was in Sabron's mind, much as he loved Pitchouné, the feeling that if he had gone that night . . .

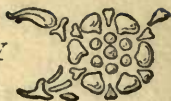
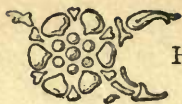
There was never another invitation!

"*Voyons, mon cher,*" his colonel had said to him kindly the next time he met him, "what stupidity have you been guilty of at the Château d'Esclignac?"

Poor Sabron blushed and shrugged his shoulders.

"I assure you," said the colonel, "that



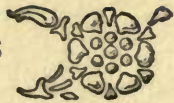


I did you harm there without knowing it. Madame d'Esclignac, who is a very clever woman, asked me with interest and sympathy, who your 'very sick friend' could be. As no one was very sick according to my knowledge, I told her so. She seemed triumphant and I saw at once that I had put you in the wrong."

It would have been simple to have explained to the colonel, but Sabron, reticent and reserved, did not choose to do so. He made a very insufficient excuse, and the colonel, as well as the marquise, thought ill of him. He learned later, with chagrin, that his friends were gone from the Midi. Rooted to the spot himself by his duties, he could not follow them. Meanwhile Pitchouné thrived, grew, cheered his loneliness, jumped over a stick, learned a trick or two from Brunet and a great many fas-



THE DOG PAYS



cinating wiles and ways, no doubt inherited from his mother. He had a sense of humor truly Irish, a power of devotion that we designate as "canine," no doubt because no member of the human race has ever deserved it.

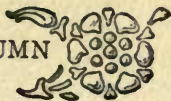
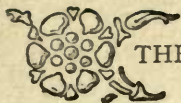
CHAPTER V.

THE GOLDEN AUTUMN

SABRON longed for a change with autumn, when the falling leaves made the roads golden roundabout the Château d'Esclignac. He thought he would like to go away. He rode his horse one day up to the property of the hard-hearted unforgiving lady and, finding the gate open, rode through the grounds up to the terrace. Seeing no one, he sat in his saddle looking over the golden country to the Rhone and the castle of the good King René, where the autumn mists were like banners floating from the towers.

There was a solitary beauty around the lovely place that spoke to the young officer with a sweet melancholy. He fancied that Miss Redmond must often have





looked out from one of the windows, and he wondered which one. The terrace was deserted and leaves from the vines strewed it with red and golden specters. Pitchouné raced after them, for the wind started them flying, and he rolled his tawny little body over and over in the rustling leaves. Then a rabbit, which before the arrival of Sabron had been sitting comfortably on the terrace stones, scuttled away like mad, and Pitchouné, somewhat hindered by his limp, tore after it.

The deserted château, the fact that there was nothing in his military life beyond the routine to interest him now in Tarascon, made Sabron eagerly look forward to a change, and he waited for letters from the minister of war which would send him to a new post.

The following day after his visit to the château he took a walk, Pitchouné at his



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heels, and stood aside in the highroad to let a yellow motor pass him, but the yellow motor at that moment drew up to the side of the road while the chauffeur got out to adjust some portion of the mechanism. Some one leaned from the yellow motor window and Sabron came forward to speak to the Marquise d'Esclignac and another lady by her side.

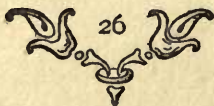
"How do you do, Monsieur? Do you remember us?"

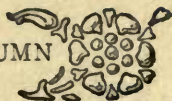
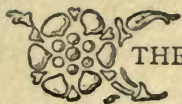
(Had he ever forgotten them?) He regretted so very much not having been able to dine with them in the spring.

"And your sick friend?" asked Madame d'Esclignac keenly, "did he recover?"

"Yes," said Sabron, and Miss Redmond, who leaned forward, smiled at him and extended her pretty hand. Sabron opened the motor door.

"What a darling dog!" Miss Redmond





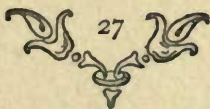
cried. "What a bewitching face he has! He's an Irish terrier, isn't he?"

Sabron called Pitchouné, who diverted his attention from the chauffeur to come and be hauled up by the collar and presented. Sabron shook off his reticence.

"Let me make a confession," he said with a courteous bow. "*This* is my 'very sick friend.' Pitchouné was at the point of death the night of your dinner and I was just leaving the house when I realized that the helpless little chap could not weather the breeze without me. He had been run over by a bicycle and he needed some very special care."

Miss Redmond's hand was on Pitchouné's head, between his pointed ears. She looked sympathetic. She looked amused. She smiled.

"It *was* a question of 'life and death,' wasn't it?" she said eagerly to Sabron.





"Really, it was just that," answered the young officer, not knowing how significant the words were to the two ladies.

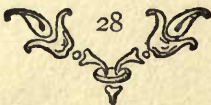
Then Madame d'Esclignac knew that she was beaten and that she owed something and was ready to pay. The chauffeur got up on his seat and she asked suavely:

"Won't you let us take you home, Monsieur Sabron?"

He thanked them. He was walking and had not finished his exercise.

"At all events," she pursued, "now that your excuse is no longer a good one, you *will* come this week to dinner, will you not?"

He would, of course, and watched the yellow motor drive away in the autumn sunlight, wishing rather less for the order from the minister of war to change his quarters than he had before.

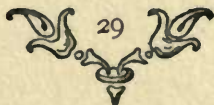


CHAPTER VI

ORDERED AWAY

HE HAD received his letter from the minister of war. Like many things we wish for, set our hopes upon, when they come we find that we do not want them at any price. The order was unwelcome. Sabron was to go to Algiers.

Winter is never very ugly around Tarascon. Like a lovely bunch of fruit in the brightest corner of a happy vineyard, the Midi is sheltered from the rude experiences that the seasons know farther north. Nevertheless, rains and winds, sea-born and vigorous, had swept in and upon the little town. The mistral came whistling and Sabron, from his window, looked down on his little garden from



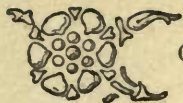


which summer had entirely flown. Pitchouné, by his side, looked down as well, but his expression, different from his master's, was ecstatic, for he saw, sliding along the brick wall, a cat with which he was on the most excited terms. His body tense, his ears forward, he gave a sharp series of barks and little soft growls, while his master tapped the window-pane to the tune of Miss Redmond's song.

Although Sabron had heard it several times, he did not know the words or that they were of a semi-religious, extremely sentimental character which would have been difficult to translate into French. He did not know that they ran something like this:

“God keep you safe, my love,
All through the night;
Rest close in His encircling arms
Until the light.”





And there was more of it. He only knew that there was a pathos in the tune which spoke to his warm heart; which caressed and captivated him and which made him long deeply for a happiness he thought it most unlikely he would ever know.

There had been many pictures added to his collection: Miss Redmond at dinner, Miss Julia Redmond—he knew her first name now—before the piano; Miss Redmond in a smart coat, walking with him down the alley, while Pitchouné chased flying leaves and apparitions of rabbits hither and thither.

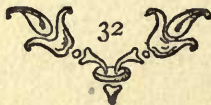
The Count de Sabron had always dreaded just what happened to him. He had fallen in love with a woman beyond his reach, for he had no fortune whatsoever, nothing but his captain's pay and his hard soldier's life, a wanderer's life

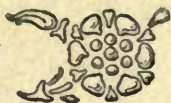


and one which he hesitated to ask a woman to share. In spite of the fact that Madame d'Esclignac was agreeable to him, she was not cordial, and he understood that she did not consider him a *parti* for her niece. Other guests, as well as he, had shared her hospitality. He had been jealous of them, though he could not help seeing Miss Redmond's preference for himself. Not that he wanted to help it. He recalled that she had really sung to him, decidedly walked by his side when there had been more than the quartette, and he felt, in short, her sympathy.

"Pitchouné," he said to his companion, "we are better off in Algiers, *mon vieux*. The desert is the place for us. We shall get rid of fancies there and do some hard fighting one way or another."

Pitchouné, whose eyes had followed the cat out of sight, sprang upon his mas-





ter and seemed quite ready for the new departure.

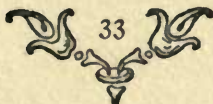
"I shall at least have you," Sabron said. "It will be your first campaign. We shall have some famous runs and I shall introduce you to a camel and make you acquainted with several donkeys, not to speak of the historic Arab steeds. You will see, my friend, that there are other animals besides yourself in creation."

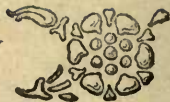
"A telegram for *mon capitaine*." Brunet came in with the blue envelope which Sabron tore open.

"You will take with you neither horses nor dogs."

It was an order from the minister of war, just such a one as was sent to some half-dozen other young officers, all of whom, no doubt, felt more or less discomfited.

Sabron twisted the telegram, put it in





the fireplace and lighted his cigarette with it, watching Pitchouné who, finding himself a comfortable corner in the armchair, had settled down for a nap.

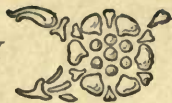
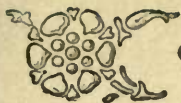
"So," nodded the young man aloud, "I shall not even have Pitchouné."

He smoked, musing. In the rigid discipline of his soldier's life he was used to obedience. His softened eyes, however, and his nervous fingers as they pulled at his mustache, showed that the command had touched him.

"What *shall* I do with you, old fellow?"

Although Sabron's voice was low, the dog, whose head was down upon his paws, turned his bright brown eyes on his master with so much confidence and affection that it completed the work. Sabron walked across the floor, smoking, the spurs on his heels clanking, the light shining on his brilliant boots and on his uni-





form. He was a splendid-looking man with race and breeding, and he combined with his masculine force the gentleness of a woman.

"They want me to be lonely," he thought. "All that the chiefs consider is the soldier—not the man—even the companionship of my dog is denied me. What do they think I am going to do out there in the long eastern evenings?" He reflected. "What does the world expect an uncompanied wanderer to do?" There are many things and the less thought about them, the better.

"A letter for Monsieur le Capitaine." Brunet returned with a note which he presented stiffly, and Pitchouné, who chose in his little brain to imagine Brunet an intruder, sprang from the chair like lightning, rushed at the servant, seized the leg of his pantaloons and began to worry



them, growling, Brunet regarding him with adoration. Sabron had not thought aloud the last words of the telegram, which he had used to light his cigarette.

“ . . . Nor will it be necessary to take a personal servant. The indigenes are capable *ordonnances*.”

As he took the letter from Brunet's salver he said curtly :

“I am ordered to Algiers and I shall not take horses nor Pitchouné.”

The dog, at the mention of his name, set Brunet's leg free and stood quiet, his head lifted.

“Nor you either, *mon brave* Brunet.” Sabron put his hand on his servant's shoulder, the first familiarity he had ever shown a man who served him with devotion, and who would have given his life to save his master's. “Those,” said the

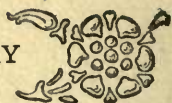


officer curtly, "are the orders from headquarters, and the least said about them the better."

The ruddy cheek of the servant turned pale. He mechanically touched his forehead.

"*Bien, mon Capitaine,*" he murmured, with a little catch in his voice. He stood at attention, then wheeled and without being dismissed, stalked out of the room.

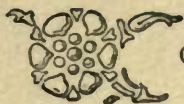
Pitchouné did not follow. He remained immovable like a little dog cut from bronze; he understood—who shall say—how much of the conversation? Sabron threw away his cigarette, then read his letter by the mantelpiece, leaning his arm upon it. He read slowly. He had broken the seal slowly. It was the first letter he had ever seen in this handwriting. It was written in French and ran thus :



“Monsieur :—My aunt wishes me to ask you if you will come to us for a little musicale to-morrow afternoon. We hope you will be free, and *I* hope,” she added, “that you will bring Pitchouné. Not that I think he will care for the music, but afterward perhaps he will run with us as we walk to the gate. My aunt wishes me to say that she has learned from the colonel that you have been ordered to Algiers. In this way she says that we shall have an opportunity of wishing you *bon voyage*, and I say I hope Pitchouné will be a comfort to you.”

The letter ended in the usual formal French fashion. Sabron, turning the letter and rereading it, found that it completed the work that had been going on in his lonely heart. He stood long, musing.

Pitchouné laid himself down on the rug, his bright little head between his paws, his affectionate eyes on his master. The firelight shone on them both, the mus-
ing young officer and the almost human-



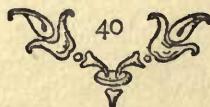
hearted little beast. So Brunet found them when he came in with the lamp shortly, and as he set it down on the table and its light shone on him, Sabron, glancing at the *ordonnance*, saw that his eyes were red, and liked him none the less for it.

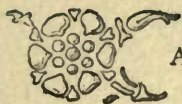
CHAPTER VII

A SOLDIER'S DOG

“**I**T IS just as I thought,” he told Pitchouné. “I took you into my life, you little rascal, against my will, and now, although it’s not your fault, you are making me regret it. I shall end, Pitchouné, by being a cynic and misogynist, and learn to make idols of my career and my troops alone. After all, they may be tiresome, but they don’t hurt as you do, and some other things as well.”

Pitchouné, being invited to the musicale at the Château d’Esclignac, went along with his master, running behind the captain’s horse. It was a heavenly January day, soft and mild, full of sunlight and delicious odors, and over the towers of

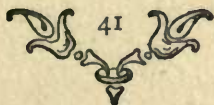




King René's castle the sky banners were made of celestial blue.

The officer found the house full of people. He thought it hard that he might not have had one more intimate picture to add to his collection. When he entered the room a young man was playing a violoncello. There was a group at the piano, and among the people the only ones he clearly saw were the hostess, Madame d'Esclignac in a gorgeous velvet frock, then Miss Redmond, who stood by the window, listening to the music. She saw him come in and smiled to him, and from that moment his eyes hardly left her.

What the music was that afternoon the Count de Sabron could not have told very intelligently. Much of it was sweet, all of it was touching, but when Miss Redmond stood to sing and chose the little song of which he had made a lullaby, and sang it



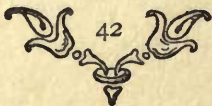


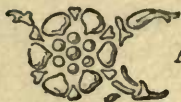
divinely, Sabron, his hands clasped behind his back and his head a little bent, still looking at her, thought that his heart would break. It was horrible to go away and not tell her. It was cowardly to feel so much and not be able to speak of it. And he felt that he might be equal to some wild deed, such as crossing the room violently, putting his hand over her slender one and saying:

“I am a soldier; I have nothing but a soldier’s life. I am going to Africa tomorrow. Come with me; I want you. Come!”

All of which, slightly impossible and quite out of the question, nevertheless charmed and soothed him. The words of her English song, almost barbaric to him because incomprehensible, fell on his ears. Its melody was already part of him.

“Monsieur de Sabron,” said Madame





d'Esclignac, "you are going away to-morrow?"

"Yes, Madame."

"I expect you will be engaged in some awful native skirmishes. Perhaps you will even be able to send back a tiger skin."

"There are no tigers in that part of Africa, Madame."

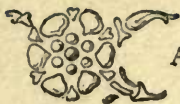
The young soldier's dark eyes rested almost hostilely on the gorgeous marquise in her red gown. He felt that she was glad to have him go. He wanted to say: "I shall come back, however; I shall come back and when I return" . . . but he knew that such a boast, or even such a hope was fruitless.

His colonel had told him only the day before that Miss Redmond was one of the richest American heiresses, and there was a question of a duke or a prince and



heaven only knew what in the way of titles. As the marquise moved away her progress was something like the rolling of an elegant velvet chair, and while his feelings were still disturbed Miss Redmond crossed the room to him. Before Sabron quite knew how they had been able to escape the others or leave the room, he was standing with her in the winter garden where the sunlight came in through trellises and the perfume of the warmed plants was heavy and sweet. Below them flowed the Rhone, golden in the winter's light. The blue river swept its waves around old Tarascon and the battlements of King René's towers.

"You are going to Algiers to-morrow, Monsieur de Sabron?" Miss Redmond smiled, and how was Sabron to realize that she could not very well have wept there and then, had she wished to do so?



"Yes," he said. "I adore my regiment. I love my work. I have always wanted to see colonial service."

"Have you? It is delightful to find one's ambitions and desires satisfied," said Miss Redmond. "I have always longed to see the desert. It must be beautiful. Of course you are going to take Pitchouné?"

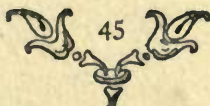
"Ah!" exclaimed Sabron, "that is just what I am not going to do."

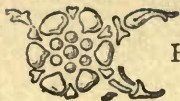
"What!" she cried. "You are never going to leave that darling dog behind you?"

"I must, unfortunately. My superior officers do not allow me to take horses or dogs, or even my servant."

"Heavens!" she exclaimed. "What brutes they are! Why, Pitchouné will die of a broken heart." Then she said: "You are leaving him with your man servant?"

Sabron shook his head.





"Brunet would not be able to keep him."

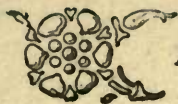
"Ah!" she breathed. "He is looking for a home? Is he? If so, would you . . . might *I* take care of Pitchouné?"

The Frenchman impulsively put out his hand, and she laid her own in it.

"You are too good," he murmured. "Thank you. Pitchouné will thank you."

He kissed her hand. That was all.

From within the salon came the noise of voices, and the bow of the violoncellist was beginning a new concerto. They stood looking at each other. No condition could have prevented it although the Marquise d'Esclignac was rolling toward them across the polished floor of the music-room. As though Sabron realized that he might never see this lovely young woman again, probably never would see



her, and wanted before he left to have something made clear, he asked quickly :

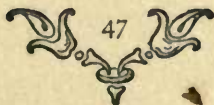
“Could you, Mademoiselle, in a word or two tell me the meaning of the English song you sang?”

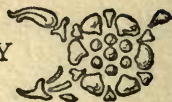
She flushed and laughed slightly.

“Well, it is not very easy to put it in prose,” she hesitated. “Things sound so differently in music and poetry; but it means,” she said in French, bravely, “why, it is a sort of prayer that some one you love very much should be kept safe night and day. That’s about all. There is a little sadness in it, as though,” and her cheeks glowed, “as if there was a sort of separation. It means . . .”

“Ah!” breathed the officer deeply, “I understand. Thank you.”

And just then Madame d’Esclignac rolled up between them and with an un-





mistakable satisfaction presented to her niece the gentleman she had secured.

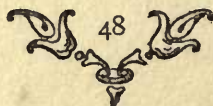
"My dear Julia, my godson, the Duc de Tremont." And Sabron bowed to both the ladies, to the duke, and went away.

This was the picture he might add to his collection: the older woman in her vivid dress, Julia in her simpler gown, and the titled Frenchman bowing over her hand.

When he went out to the front terrace Brunet was there with his horse, and Pitchouné was there as well, stiffly waiting at attention.

"Brunet," said the officer to his man, "will you take Pitchouné around to the servants' quarters and give him to Miss Redmond's maid? I am going to leave him here."

"Good, *mon Capitaine*," said the *ordonnance*, and whistled to the dog.





A SOLDIER'S DOG



Pitchouné sprang toward his master with a short sharp bark. What he understood would be hard to say, but all that he wanted to do was to remain with Sabron. Sabron bent down and stroked him.

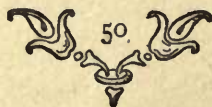
“Go, my friend, with Brunet. Go, *mon vieux*, go,” he commanded sternly, and the little dog, trained to obedience as a soldier’s dog should be, trotted reluctantly at the heels of the *ordonnance*, and the soldier threw his leg over the saddle and rode away. He rode regardless of anything but the fact that he was going.

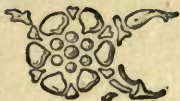
CHAPTER VIII

HOMESICK

PITCHOUNE was a soldier's dog, born in a stable, of a mother who had been dear to the canteen. Michette had been *une vrai* vivandière, a real daughter of the regiment.

Pitchouné was a worthy son. He adored the drums and trumpets. He adored the fife. He adored the drills which he was accustomed to watch from a respectable distance. He liked Brunet, and the word had not yet been discovered which would *express* how he felt toward Monsieur le Capitaine, his master. His muscular little form expressed it in every fiber. His brown eyes looked it un-





til their pathos might have melted a heart of iron.

There was nothing picturesque to Pitchouné in the Château d'Esclignac or in the charming room to which he was brought. The little dog took a flying tour around it, over sofas and chairs, landing on the window-seat, where he crouched. He was not wicked, but he was perfectly miserable, and the lovely wiles of Julia Redmond and her endearments left him unmoved. He refused meat and drink, was indifferent to the views from the window, to the beautiful view of King René's castle, to the tantalizing cat sunning herself against the wall. He flew about like mad, leaving destruction in his wake, tugged at the leash when they took him out for exercise. In short, Pitchouné was a homesick, lovesick little dog, and thereby endeared himself



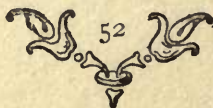
more than ever to his new mistress. She tied a ribbon around his neck, which he promptly chewed and scratched off. She tried to feed him with her own fair hands; he held his head high, looked bored and grew thin in the flanks.

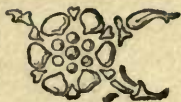
"I thing Captain de Sabron's little dog is going to die, *ma tante*," she told her aunt.

"Fiddlesticks, my dear Julia! Keep him tied up until he is accustomed to the place. It won't hurt him to fast; he will eat when he is hungry. I have a note from Robert. He has not gone to Monte Carlo."

"Ah!" breathed Miss Redmond indifferently.

She slowly went over to her piano and played a few measures of music that were a torture to Pitchouné, who found these ladylike performances in strong contrast to drums and trumpets. He felt

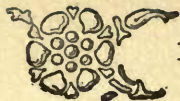




himself as a soldier degraded and could not understand why he should be relegated to a salon and to the mild society of two ladies who did not even know how to pull his ears or roll him over on the rug with their riding boots and spurs. He sat against the window as was his habit, looking, watching, yearning.

"Vous avez tort, ma chere," said her aunt, who was working something less than a thousand flowers on her tapestry. "The chance to be a princess and a Tremont does not come twice in a young girl's life, and you know you have only to be reasonable, Julia."

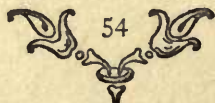
Miss Redmond's fingers wandered, magnetically drawn by her thoughts, into a song which she played softly through. Pitchouné heard and turned his beautiful head and his soft eyes to her. He knew that tune. Neither drums nor trumpets

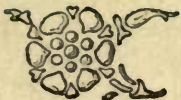


had played it but there was no doubt about its being fit for soldiers. He had heard his master sing it, hum it, many times. It had soothed his nerves when he was a sick puppy and it went with many things of the intimate life with his master. He remembered it when he had dozed by the fire and dreamed of chasing cats and barking at Brunet and being a faithful dog all around; he heard again a beloved voice hum it to him. Pitchouné whined and softly jumped down from his seat. He put his forepaws on Miss Redmond's lap. She stopped and caressed him, and he licked her hand.

"That is the first time I have seen that dog show a spark of human gratitude, Julia. He is probably begging you to open the door and let him take a run."

Indeed Pitchouné did go to the door and waited appealingly.





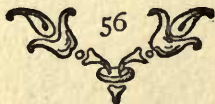
"I think you might trust him out. I think he is tamed," said the Marquise d'Esclignac. "He is a real little savage."

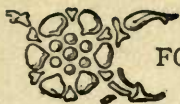
Miss Redmond opened the door and Pitchouné shot out. She watched him tear like mad across the terrace, and scuttle into the woods, as she thought, after a rabbit. He was the color of the fallen leaves and she lost sight of him in the brown and golden brush.

CHAPTER IX

THE FORTUNES OF WAR

SABRON'S departure had been delayed on account of a strike at the dockyards of Marseilles. He left Tarascon one lovely day toward the end of January and the old town with its sweetness and its sorrow, fell behind, as he rolled away to brighter suns. A friend from Paris took him to the port in his motor and there Sabron waited some forty-eight hours before he set sail. His boat lay out on the azure water, the brown rocks of the coast behind it. There was not a ripple on the sea. There was not a breeze to stir as he took the tug which was to convey him. He was inclined to dip his fingers in the indigo ocean, sure that he would



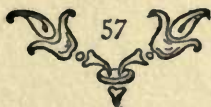


find them blue. He climbed up the ladder alongside of the vessel, was welcomed by the captain, who knew him, and turned to go below, for he had been suffering from an attack of fever which now and then laid hold of him, ever since his campaign in Morocco.

Therefore, as he went into his cabin, which he did not leave until the steamer touched Algiers, he failed to see the baggage tender pull up and failed to see a sailor climb to the deck with a wet bedraggled thing in his hand that looked like an old fur cap except that it wriggled and was alive.

"This, *mon commandant*," said the sailor to the captain, "is the pluckiest little beast I ever saw."

He dropped a small terrier on the deck, who proceeded to shake himself vigorously and bark with apparent delight.





"No sooner had we pushed out from the quay than this little beggar sprang from the pier and began to swim after us. He was so funny that we let him swim for a bit and then we hauled him in. It is evidently a mascot, *mon commandant*, evidently a sailor dog who has run away to sea."

The captain looked with interest at Pit-chouné, who engaged himself in making his toilet and biting after a flea or two which had not been drowned.

"We sailors," said the man saluting, "would like to keep him for luck, *mon commandant*."

"Take him down then," his superior officer ordered, "and don't let him up among the passengers."

.

It was a rough voyage. Sabron passed his time saying good-by to France and



trying to keep his mind away from the Château d'Esclignac, which persisted in haunting his uneasy slumber. In a blaze of sunlight, Algiers, the white city, shone upon them on the morning of the third day and Sabron tried to take a more cheerful view of a soldier's life and fortunes.

He was a soldierly figure and a handsome one as he walked down the gang-plank to the shore to be welcomed by fellow officers who were eager to see him, and presently was lost in the little crowd that streamed away from the docks into the white city.

CHAPTER X

TOGETHER AGAIN

THAT night after dinner and a cigarette, he strode into the streets to distract his mind with the sight of the oriental city and to fill his ears with the eager cries of the crowd. The lamps flickered. The sky overhead was as blue nearly as in daytime. He walked leisurely toward the native quarter, jostled, as he passed, by men in their brilliant costumes and by a veiled woman or two.

He stopped indifferently before a little café, his eyes on a Turkish bazaar where velvets and scarfs were being sold at double their worth under the light of a flaming yellow lamp. As he stood so, his back to the café where a number of the

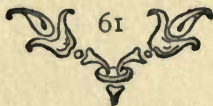




ship's crew were drinking, he heard a short sharp sound that had a sweet familiarity about it and whose individuality made him start with surprise. He could not believe his ears. He heard the bark again and then he was sprung upon by a little body that ran out from between the legs of a sailor who sat drinking his coffee and liquor.

"Gracious heavens!" exclaimed Sabron, thinking that he must be the victim of a hashish dream. "Pitchouné!"

The dog fawned on him and whined, crouched at his feet whining—like a child. Sabron bent and fondled him. The sailor from the table called the dog imperatively, but Pitchouné would have died at his master's feet rather than return. If his throat could have uttered words he would have spoken, but his eyes spoke. They looked as though they were tearful.





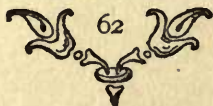
"Pitchouné, *mon vieux*! No, it can't be Pitchouné. But it is Pitchouné!" And Sabron took him up in his arms. The dog tried to lick his face.

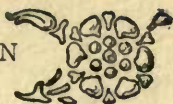
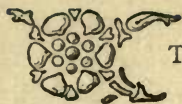
"*Voyons*," said the officer to the marine, who came rolling over to them, "where did you get this dog?"

The young man's voice was imperative and he fixed stern eyes on the sailor, who pulled his forelock and explained.

"He was following me," said Sabron, not without a slight catch in his voice. The body of Pitchouné quivered under his arm. "He is my dog. I think his manner proves it. If you have grown fond of him I am sorry for you, but I think you will have to give him up."

Sabron put his hand in his pocket and turned a little away to be free of the native crowd that, chattering and grinning, amused and curious and eager to partici-



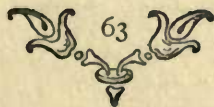


pate in any distribution of coin, was gathering around him. He found two gold pieces which he put into the hand of the sailor.

"Thank you for taking care of him. I am at the Royal Hotel." He nodded, and with Pitchouné under his arm pushed his way through the crowd and out of the bazaar.

He could not interview the dog himself, although he listened, amused, to Pitchouné's own manner of speech. He spent the latter part of the evening composing a letter to the minister of war, and although it was short, it must have possessed certain evident and telling qualities, for before he left Algiers proper for the desert, Sabron received a telegram much to the point:

"You may keep your dog. I congratulate you on such a faithful companion."



CHAPTER XI

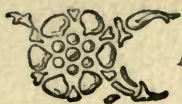
A SACRED TRUST

HIS eyes had grown accustomed to the glare of the beautiful sands, but his sense of beauty was never satisfied with looking at the desert picture and drinking in the glory and the loveliness of the melancholy waste. Standing in the door of his tent in fatigue uniform, he said to Pitchouné:

“I could be perfectly happy here if I were not alone.”

Pitchouné barked. He had not grown accustomed to the desert. He hated it. It slipped away from under his little feet; he could not run on it with any comfort. He spent his days idly in his master's tent or royally perched on a

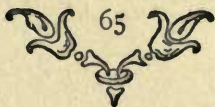




camel, crouching close to Sabron's man servant when they went on caravan explorations.

"Yes," said Sabron, "if I were not alone. I don't mean you, *mon vieux*. You are a great deal, but you really don't count, you know."

Before his eyes the sands were as pink as countless rose leaves. To Sabron they were as fragrant as flowers. The peculiar incense-like odor that hovers above the desert when the sun declines was to him the most delicious thing he had ever inhaled. All the west was as red as fire. The day had been hot and there came up the cool breeze that would give them a delicious night. Overhead, one by one, he watched the blossoming out of the great stars; each one hung above his lonely tent like a bridal flower in a veil of blue. On all sides, like white petals on

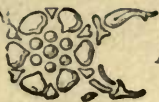




the desert face, were the tents of his men and his officers, and from the encampment came the hum of military life, yet the silence to him was profound. He had only to order his stallion saddled and to ride away for a little distance in order to be alone with the absolute stillness.

This he often did and took his thoughts with him and came back to his tent more conscious of his solitude every night of his life.

There had been much looting of caravans in the region by brigands, and his business was that of sentinel for the commerce of the plains. Thieving and rapacious tribes were under his eye and his care. To-night, as he stood looking toward the west into the glow, shading his eyes with his hand, he saw coming toward them what he knew to be a caravan from Algiers. His *ordonnance* was a native



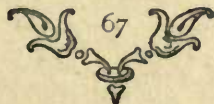
soldier, one of the desert tribes, black as ink, and scarcely more child-like than Brunet and presumably as devoted.

"Mustapha," Sabron ordered, "fetch me out a lounge chair." He spoke in French and pointed, for the man understood imperfectly and Sabron did not yet speak Arabic.

He threw himself down, lighted a fresh cigarette, dragged Pitchouné by the nape of his neck up to his lap, and the two sat watching the caravan slowly grow into individuals of camels and riders and finally mass itself in shadow within some four or five hundred yards of the encampment.

The sentinels and the soldiers began to gather and Sabron saw a single footman making his way toward the camp.

"Go," he said to Mustapha, "and see what message the fellow brings to the regiment."





Mustapha went, and after a little returned, followed by the man himself, a black-bearded, half-naked Bedouin, swathed in dust-colored burnoose and carrying a bag.

He bowed to Captain de Sabron and extended the leather bag. On the outside of the leather there was a ticket pasted, which read:

"The Post for the ————Squadron of Cavalry—"

Sabron added mentally:

"—wherever it may happen to be!"

He ordered bakshish given to the man and sent him off. Then he opened the French mail. He was not more than three hundred miles from Algiers. It had taken him a long time to work down to Dirbal, however, and they had had some hardships. He felt a million miles away. The look of the primitive mail-bag and the

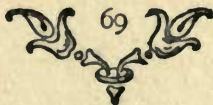


knowledge of how far it had traveled to find the people to whom these letters were addressed made his hands reverent as he unfastened the sealed labels. He looked the letters through, returned the bag to Mustapha and sent him off to distribute the post.

Then, for the light was bad, brilliant though the night might be, he went into his tent with his own mail. On his dressing-table was a small illumination consisting of a fat candle set in a glass case. The mosquitoes and flies were thick around it. Pitchouné followed him and lay down on a rush mat by the side of Sabron's military bed, while the soldier read his letter.

“Monsieur :—

“I regret more than ever that I can not write your language perfectly. But even in my own I could not find any word





HIS LOVE STORY



to express how badly I feel over something which has happened.

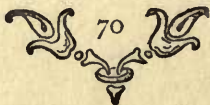
"I took the best of care of Pitchouné. I thought I did, but I could not make him happy. He mourned terribly. He refused to eat, and one day I was so careless as to open the door for him and we have never seen him since. As far as I know he has not been found. Your man, Brunet, comes sometimes to see my maid, and he thinks he has been hurt and died in the woods."

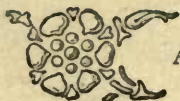
Sabron glanced over to the mat where Pitchouné, stretched on his side, his forelegs wide, was breathing tranquilly in the heat.

"We have heard rumors of a little dog who was seen running along the highway, miles from Tarascon, but of course that could not have been Pitchouné."

Sabron nodded. "It was, however, *mon brave*," he said to the terrier.

"Not but what I think his little heart was brave enough and valiant enough to





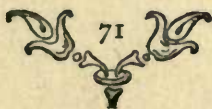
have followed you, but no dog could go so far without a better scent."

Sabron said: "It is one of the regrets of my life that you can not tell us about it. How did you get the scent? How did you follow me?" Pitchouné did not stir, and Sabron's eyes returned to the page.

"I do not think you will ever forgive us. You left us a trust and we did not guard it."

He put the letter down a moment, brushed some of the flies away from the candle and made the wick brighter. Mustapha came in, black as ebony, his woolly head bare. * He stood as stiff as a ramrod and as black. In his child-like French he said:

"Monsieur le Lieutenant asks if Monsieur le Capitaine will come to play a game of *carté* in the mess tent?"





HIS LOVE STORY



"No," said Sabron, without turning. "Not to-night." He went on with his letter:

" . . . a sacred trust."

Half aloud he murmured: "I left a very sacred trust at the Château d'Esclignac, Mademoiselle; but as no one knew anything about it there will be no question of guarding it, I dare say."

" . . . So I write you this letter to tell you about darling Pitchouné. I had grown to love him though he did not like me. I miss him terribly. . . . My aunt asks me to say that she hopes you had a fine crossing and that you will send us a tiger skin; but I am sure there are no tigers near Algiers. I say . . ."

And Sabron did not know how long Miss Redmond's pen had hesitated in writing the closing lines:

" . . . I say I hope you will be successful and that although nothing can





A SACRED TRUST



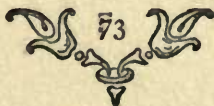
take the place of Pitchouné, you will find some one to make the desert less solitary.

"Sincerely yours,

"JULIA REDMOND."

When Sabron had read the letter several times he kissed it fervently and put it in his pocket next his heart.

"That," he said to Pitchouné, making the dog an unusual confidence, "that will keep me less lonely. At the same time it makes me more so. This is a paradox, *mon vieux*, which you can not understand."



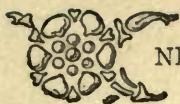
CHAPTER XII

THE NEWS FROM AFRICA

IT TOOK the better part of three evenings to answer her letter, and the writing of it gave Sabron a vast amount of pleasure and some tender sorrow. It made him feel at once so near to this lovely woman and at once so far away. In truth there is a great difference between a spahi on an African desert, and a young American heiress dreaming in her chintz-covered bedroom in a château in the Midi of France.

Notwithstanding, the young American heiress felt herself as much alone in her chintz-covered bedroom and as desolate, perhaps more so, than did Sabron in his tent. Julia Redmond felt, too, that she





was surrounded by people hostile to her friend.

Sabron's letter told her of Pitchouné and was written as only the hand of a charming and imaginative Frenchman can write a letter. Also, his pent-up heart and his reserve made what he did say stronger than if perhaps he could have expressed it quite frankly.

Julia Redmond turned the sheets that told of Pitchouné's following his master, and colored with joy and pleasure as she read. She wiped away two tears at the end, where Sabron said:

"Think of it, Mademoiselle, a little dog following his master from peace and plenty, from quiet and security, into the desert! And think what it means to have this little friend!"

Julia Redmond reflected, was greatly touched and loved Pitchouné more than

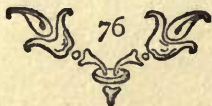


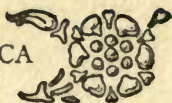
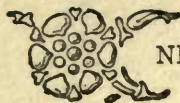
HIS LOVE STORY



ever. She would have changed places with him gladly. It was an honor, a distinction to share a soldier's exile and to be his companion. Then Sabron wrote, in closing words which she read and re-read many, many times.

"Mademoiselle, in this life many things follow us; certain of these follow us whether we will or not. Some things we are strong enough to forbid, yet we do not forbid them! My little dog followed me; I had nothing to do with that. It was a question of fate. Something else has followed me as well. It is not a living thing, and yet it has all the qualities of vitality. It is a tune. From the moment I left the château the first night I had the joy of seeing you, Mademoiselle, the tune you sang became a companion to me and has followed me everywhere . . . followed me to my barracks, followed me across the sea, and here in my tent it keeps me company. I find that when I wake at night the melody sings to me; I find that when I mount my horse and ride with my men, when the desert's



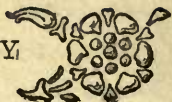


sands are shifted by my horse's feet, something sings in the sun and in the heat, something sings in the chase and in the pursuit, and in the nights, under the stars, the same air haunts me still.

"I am glad you told me what the words mean, for I find them beautiful; the music in it would not be the same without the strength and form of the words. So it is, Mademoiselle, with life. Feelings and sentiments, passions and emotions, are like music. They are great and beautiful; they follow us, they are part of us, but they would be nothing—music would be nothing without forms by which we could make it audible—appealing not to our senses alone but to our souls!

"And yet I must close my letter sending you only the tune; the words I *can not* send you, yet believe me, they form part of everything I do or say.

"To-morrow, I understand from my men, we shall have some lively work to do. Whatever that work is you will hear of it through the papers. There is a little town near here called Dirbal, inhabited by a poor tribe whose lives have been made miserable by robbers and slave-dealers. It is the business of us watchers of



the plains to protect them, and I believe we shall have a lively skirmish with the marauders. There is a congregation of tribes coming down from the north. When I go out with my people to-morrow it may be into danger, for in a wandering life like this, who can tell? I do not mean to be either morbid or sentimental. I only mean to be serious, Mademoiselle, and I find that I am becoming so serious that it will be best to close.

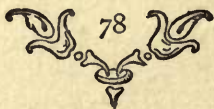
“Adieu, Mademoiselle. When you look from your window on the Rhone Valley and see the peaceful fields of Tarascon, when you look on your peaceful gardens, perhaps your mind will travel farther and you will think of Africa. Do so if you can, and perhaps to-night you will say the words only of the song before you go to sleep.

“I am, Mademoiselle,

“Faithfully yours,

“CHARLES DE SABRON.”

There was only one place for a letter such as that to rest, and it rested on that gentle pillow for many days. It proved a heavy weight against Julia Redmond's





heart. She could, indeed, speak the words of the song, and did, and they rose as a nightly prayer for a soldier on the plains; but she could not keep her mind and thoughts at rest. She was troubled and unhappy; she grew pale and thin; she pined more than Pitchouné had pined, and she, alas! could not break her chains and run away.

The Duc de Tremont was a constant guest at the house, but he found the American heiress a very capricious and uncertain lady, and Madame d'Esclignac was severe with her niece.

"My dear Julia," she said to the beautiful girl, looking at her through her lorgnon; "I don't understand you. Every one of your family has married a title. We have not thought that we could do better with our money than build up fortunes already started; than in preserving



HIS LOVE STORY



noble races and noble names. There has never been a divorce in our family. I am a marquise, your cousin is a countess, your aunt is one of the peeresses of England, and as for you, my dear . . ."

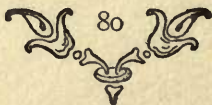
Miss Redmond was standing by the piano. She had lifted the cover and was about to sit down to play. She smiled slightly at her aunt, and seemed in the moment to be the older woman.

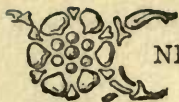
"There are titles and titles, *ma tante*: the only question is what kind do you value the most?"

"The highest!" said her aunt without hesitation, "and the Duc de Tremont is undoubtedly one of the most famous *partis* in Europe."

"He will then find no difficulty in marrying," said the young girl, "and I do not wish to marry a man I do not love."

She sat down at the piano and her





hands touched the keys. Her aunt, who was doing some dainty tapestry, whose fingers were creating silken flowers and whose mind was busy with fancies and ambitions very like the work she created, shrugged her shoulders.

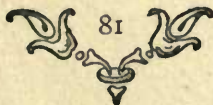
"That seems to be," she said keenly, "the only tune you know, Julia."

"It's a pretty song, *ma tante*."

"I remember that you played and sang it the first night Sabron came to dinner." The girl continued to finger among the chords. "And since then never a day passes that sometime or other you do not play it through."

"It has become a sort of *oraison*, *ma tante*."

"Sabron," said the marquise, "is a fine young man, my child, but he has nothing but his officer's pay. Moreover, a soldier's life is a precarious one."





Julia Redmond played the song softly through.

The old butler came in with the evening mail and the papers. The Marquise d'Esclignac, with her embroidery scissors, opened *Le Temps* from Paris and began to read with her usual interest. She approached the little lamp on the table near her, unfolded the paper and looked over at her niece, and after a few moments, said with a slightly softened voice:

"Julia!" Miss Redmond stopped playing. "Julia!" The girl rose from the piano-stool and stood with her hand on the instrument.

"My dear Julia!" Madame d'Esclignac spread *Le Temps* out and put her hand on it. "As I said to you, my child, the life of a soldier is a precarious one."

"*Ma tante*," breathed Miss Redmond from where she stood. "Tell me what



the news is from Africa. I think I know what you mean."

She could not trust herself to walk across the floor, for Julia Redmond in that moment of suspense found the room swimming.

"There has been an engagement," said the marquise gently, for in spite of her ambitions she loved her niece. "There has been an engagement, Julia, at Dirbal." She lifted the newspaper and held it before her face and read:

"There has been some hard fighting in the desert, around about Dirbal. The troops commanded by Captain de Sabron were routed by the natives at noon on Thursday. They did not rally and were forced to retreat. There was a great loss of life among the natives and several of the regiment were also killed. There has been no late or authentic news from Dirbal, but the last des-



patches give the department of war to understand that Sabron himself is among the missing."

The Marquise d'Esclignac slowly put down the paper, and rose quickly. She went to the young girl's side and put her arm around her. Miss Redmond covered her face with her hands:

"Ma tante, ma tante!" she murmured.

"My dear Julia," said the old lady, "there is nothing more uncertain than newspaper reports, especially those that come from the African seat of war. Sit down here, my child."

The two women sat together on the long piano-stool. The marquise said:

"I followed the fortunes, my dear, of my husband's cousin through the engagement in Tonkin. I know a little what it was." The girl was immovable. Her aunt felt her rigid by her side. "I told



you," she murmured, "that a soldier's life was a precarious one."

Miss Redmond threw away all disguise.

"*Ma tante*," she said in a hard voice. "I love him! You must have known it and seen it. I love him! He is becoming my life."

As the marquise looked at the girl's face and saw her trembling lips and her wide eyes, she renounced her ambitions for Julia Redmond. She renounced them with a sigh, but she was a woman of the world, and more than that to a woman. She remained for a moment in silence, holding Julia's hands.

She had followed the campaign of her husband's cousin, a young man with an insignificant title whom she had *not* married. In this moment she relived again the arrival of the evening papers; the despatches, her husband's news of his



cousin. As she kissed Julia's cheeks a moisture passed over her own eyes, which for many years had shed no tears.

"Courage, my dear," she implored, "we will telegraph at once to the minister of war for news."

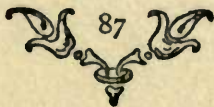
The girl drew a convulsive breath and turned, and leaning both elbows on the piano keys—perhaps in the very notes whose music in the little song had charmed Sabron—she burst into tears. The marquise rose and passed out of the room to send a man with a despatch to Tarascon.

CHAPTER XIII

ONE DOG'S DAY

THERE must be a real philosophy in all proverbs. "Every dog has his day" is a significant one. It surely was for Pitchouné. He had his day. It was a glorious one, a terrible one, a memorable one, and he played his little part in it. He awoke at the gray dawn, springing like a flash from the foot of Sabron's bed, where he lay asleep, in response to the sound of the reveille, and Sabron sprang up after him.

Pitchouné in a few moments was in the center of real disorder. All he knew was that he followed his master all day long. The dog's knowledge did not comprehend the fact that not only had the





native village, of which his master spoke in his letter to Miss Redmond, been destroyed, but that Sabron's regiment itself was menaced by a concerted and concentrated attack from an entire tribe, led by a fanatic as hotminded and as fierce as the Mahdi of Sudanese history.

Pitchouné followed at the heels of his master's horse. No one paid any attention to him. Heaven knows why he was not trampled to death, but he was not. No one trod on him; no horse's hoof hit his little wiry form that managed in the midst of carnage and death to keep itself secure and his hide whole. He smelt the gunpowder, he smelt the smoke, sniffed at it, threw up his pretty head and barked, puffed and panted, yelped and tore about and followed. He was not conscious of anything but that Sabron was in motion; that Sabron, his beloved master, was

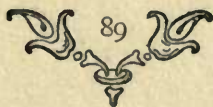


ONE DOG'S DAY



in action of some kind or other and he, a soldier's dog, was in action, too. He howled at fierce dark faces, when he saw them. He snarled at the bullets that whistled around his ears and, laying his little ears back, he shook his black muzzle in the very grin of death.

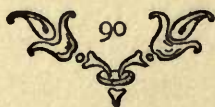
Sabron's horse was shot under him, and then Pitchouné saw his master, sprang upon him, and his feelings were not hurt that no attention was paid him, that not even his name was called, and as Sabron struggled on, Pitchouné followed. It was his day; he was fighting the natives; he was part of a battle; he was a soldier's dog! Little by little the creatures and things around him grew fewer, the smoke cleared and rolled away, there were a few feet of freedom around him in which he stood and barked; then he was off again close to his master's heels and

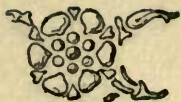




not too soon. He did not know the blow that struck Sabron, but he saw him fall, and then there came into his canine heart some knowledge of the importance of his day. He had raced himself weary. Every bone in his little body ached with fatigue.

Sabron lay his length on the bed of a dried-up river, one of those phantom-like channels of a desert stream whose course runs watery only certain times of the year. Sabron, wounded in the abdomen, lay on his side. Pitchouné smelled him from head to foot, addressed himself to his restoration in his own way. He licked his face and hands and ears, sat sentinel at the beloved head where the forehead was covered with sweat and blood. He barked feverishly and to his attentive ears there came no answer whatsoever, either from the wounded man in the bed of the African river or from the silent plains.



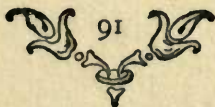


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Sabron was deserted. He had fallen and not been missed and his regiment, routed by the Arabs, had been driven into retreat. Finally the little dog, who knew by instinct that life remained in his master's body, set himself at work vigorously to awaken a sign of life. He attacked Sabron's shoulder as though it were a prey; he worried him, barked in his ear, struck him lightly with his paw, and finally, awakening to dreadful pain, to fever and to isolation, awakening perhaps to the battle for life, to the attentions of his friend, the spahi opened his eyes.

Sabron's wound was serious, but his body was vigorous, strong and healthy, and his mind more so. There was a film over it just now. He raised himself with great effort, and in a moment realized where he was and that to linger there was a horrible death. On each side of the





river rose an inclined bank, not very high and thickly grown with mimosa bush. This meant to him that beyond it and probably within easy reach, there would be shade from the intense and dreadful glare beating down upon him, with death in every ray. He groaned and Pitchouné's voice answered him. Sabron paid no attention to his dog, did not even call his name. His mind, accustomed to quick decisions and to a matter-of-fact consideration of life, instantly took its proper course. He must get out of the river bed or die there, rot there.

What there was before him to do was so stupendous an undertaking that it made him almost unconscious of the pain in his loins. He could not stand, could not thoroughly raise himself; but by great and painful effort, bleeding at every move, he could crawl; he did so, and the sun



ONE DOG'S DAY

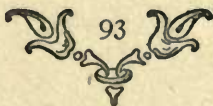


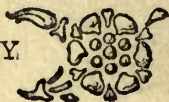
beat upon him. Pitchouné walked by his side, whining, talking to him, encouraging him, and the spahi, ashen pale, his bright gray uniform ripped and stained, all alone in the desert, with death above him and death on every hand, crawled, dragged, hitched along out of the river to the bank, cheered, encouraged by his little dog.

For a drop of water he would have given—oh, what had he to give? For a little shade, he would have given—about all he had to give had been given to his duty in this engagement which could never bring him glory, or distinction or any renown. The work of a spahi with a native regiment is not a very glorious affair. He was simply an officer who fell doing his daily work.

Pitchouné barked and cried out to him: "Courage!"

"I shall die here at the foot of the mi-

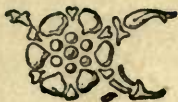




mosa," Sabron thought; and his hands hardly had the courage or strength to grasp the first bushes by which he meant to pull himself up on the bank. The little dog was close to him, leaping, springing near him, and Sabron did not know how tired and thirsty and exhausted his brave little companion was, or that perhaps in that heroic little body there was as much of a soldier's soul as in his own human form.

The sun was so hot that it seemed to sing in the bushes. Its torrid fever struck on his brow, struck on his chest; why did it not kill him? He was not even delirious, and yet the bushes sang dry and crackling. What was their melody? He knew it. Just one melody haunted him always, and now he knew the words: they were a prayer for safety.

"But," Sabron said aloud, "it is a



ONE DOG'S DAY



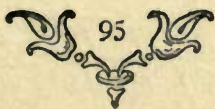
prayer to be said at night and not in the afternoon of an African hell."

He began to climb; he pulled himself along, leaving his track in blood.

He fainted twice, and the thick growth held him like the wicker of a cradle, and before he came to his consciousness the sun was mercifully going down. He finally reached the top of the bank and lay there panting. Not far distant were the bushes of rose and mimosa flower, and still panting, weaker and ever weaker, his courage the only living thing in him, Sabron, with Pitchouné by his side, dragged himself into healing hands.

All that night Sabron was delirious; his mind traveled far into vague fantastic countries, led back again, ever gently, by a tune, to safety.

Every now and then he would realize that he was alone on the vast desert, des-





tined to finish his existence here, to cease being a human creature and to become nothing but carrion. Moments of consciousness succeeded those of mental disorder. Every now and then he would feel Pitchouné close to his arm. The dog licked his hand and the touch was grateful to the deserted officer. Pitchouné licked his master's cheek and Sabron felt that there was another life beside his in the wilderness. Neither dog nor man could long exist, however, without food or drink, and Sabron was growing momentarily weaker.

The Frenchman, though a philosopher, realized how hard it was to die unsatisfied in love, unsatisfied in life, having accomplished nothing, having wished many things and realized at an early age only death! Then this point of view changed and the physical man was uppermost.



He groaned for water, he groaned for relief from pain, turned his head from side to side, and Pitchouné whined softly. Sabron was not strong enough to speak to him, and their voices, of man and beast, inarticulate, mingled—both left to die in the open.

Then Sabron violently rebelled and cried out in his soul against fate and destiny. He could have cursed the day he was born. Keenly desirous to live, to make his mark and to win everything a man values, why should he be picked and chosen for this lonely pathetic end? Moreover, he did not wish to suffer like this, to lose his grasp on life, to go on into wilder delirium and to die! He knew enough of injuries to feel sure that his wound alone could not kill him. When he had first dragged himself into the shade he had fainted, and when he came to him-



self he might have stanchd his blood. His wound was hardly bleeding now. It had already died! Fatigue and thirst, fever would finish him, not his hurt. He was too young to die.

With great effort he raised himself on his arm and scanned the desert stretching on all sides like a rosy sea. Along the river bank the pale and delicate blossom and leaf of the mimosa lay like a bluish veil, and the smell of the evening and the smell of the mimosa flower and the perfumes of the weeds came to him, aromatic and sweet. Above his head the blue sky was ablaze with stars and directly over him the evening star hung like a crystal lamp. But there was no beauty in it for the wounded officer who looked in vain to the dark shadows on the desert that might mean approaching human life. It



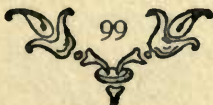
ONE DOG'S DAY



would be better to die as he was dying, than to be found by the enemy!

The sea of waste rolled unbroken as far as his fading eyes could reach. He sank back with a sigh, not to rise again, and closed his eyes and waited. He slept a short, restless, feverish sleep, and in it dreams chased one another like those evoked by a narcotic, but out of them, over and over again came the picture of Julia Redmond, and she sang to him the song whose words were a prayer for the safety of a loved one during the night.

From that romantic melody there seemed to rise more solemn ones. He heard the rolling of the organ in the cathedral in his native town, for he came from Rouen originally, where there is one of the most beautiful cathedrals in the world. The music rolled and rolled and





passed over the desert's face. It seemed to lift his spirit and to cradle it. Then he breathed his prayers,—they took form, and in his sleep he repeated the *Ave Maria* and the *Paternoster*, and the words rolled and rolled over the desert's face and the supplication seemed to his feverish mind to mingle with the stars.

A sort of midnight dew fell upon him: so at least he thought, and it seemed to him a heavenly dew and to cover him like a benignant rain. He grew cooler. He prayed again, and with his words there came to the young man an ineffable sense of peace. He pillowed his fading thoughts upon it; he pillowed his aching mind upon it and his body, too, and the pain of his wound and he thought aloud, with only the night airs to hear him, in broken sentences: "If this is death it is not so bad. One should rather be afraid





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of life. This is not difficult, if I should ever get out of here I shall not regret this night."

Toward morning he grew calmer, he turned to speak to his little companion. In his troubled thoughts he had forgotten Pitchouné.

Sabron faintly called him. There was no response. Then the soldier listened in silence. It was absolutely unbroken. Not even the call of a night-bird—not even the cry of a hyena,—nothing came to him but the inarticulate voice of the desert. Great and solemn awe crept up to him, crept up to him like a spirit and sat down by his side. He felt his hands grow cold, and his feet grow cold. Now, unable to speak aloud, there passed through his mind that this, indeed, was death, desertion absolute in the heart of the plains.

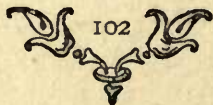


CHAPTER XIV

AN AMERICAN GIRL

THE Marquise d'Esclignac saw that she had to reckon with an American girl. Those who know these girls know what their temper and mettle are, and that they are capable of the finest reverberations.

Julia Redmond was very young. Otherwise she would never have let Sabron go without one sign that she was not indifferent to him, and that she was rather bored with the idea of titles and fortunes. But she adored her aunt and saw, moreover, something else than ribbons and velvets in the make-up of the aunt. She saw deeper than the polish that a long Parisian lifetime had overlaid, and she loved what she





saw. She respected her aunt, and knowing the older lady's point of view, had been timid and hesitating until now.

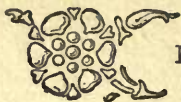
Now the American girl woke up, or rather asserted herself.

"My dear Julia," said the Marquise d'Esclignac, "are you sure that all the tinned things, the cocoa, and so forth, are on board? I did not see that box."

"*Ma tante*," returned her niece from her steamer chair, "it's the only piece of luggage I am sure about."

At this response her aunt suffered a slight qualm for the fate of the rest of her luggage, and from her own chair in the shady part of the deck glanced toward her niece, whose eyes were on her book.

"What a practical girl she is," thought the Marquise d'Esclignac. "She seems ten years older than I. She is cut

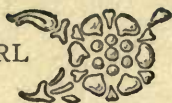


out to be the wife of a poor man. It is a pity she should have a fortune. Julia would have been charming as love in a cottage, whereas I . . .”

She remembered her hotel on the Parc Monceau, her château by the Rhone, her villa at Biarritz—and sighed. She had not always been the Marquise d’Esclignac; she had been an American girl first and remembered that her maiden name had been De Puyster and that she had come from Schenectady originally. But for many years she had forgotten these things. Near to Julia Redmond these last few weeks all but courage and simplicity had seemed to have tarnish on its wings.

Sabron had not been found.

It was a curious fact, and one that transpires now and then in the history of



desert wars—the man is lost. The captain of the cavalry was missing, and the only news of him was that he had fallen in an engagement and that his body had never been recovered. Several sorties had been made to find him; the war department had done all that it could; he had disappeared from the face of the desert and even his bones could not be found.

From the moment that Julia Redmond had confessed her love for the Frenchman, a courage had been born in her which never faltered, and her aunt seemed to have been infected by it. The marquise grew sentimental, found out that she was more docile and impressionable than she had believed herself to be, and the veneer and etiquette (no doubt never a very real part of her) became less im-



portant than other things. During the last few weeks she had been more a De Puyster from Schenectady than the Marquise d'Esclignac.

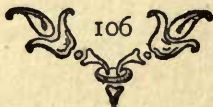
"*Ma tante*," Julia Redmond had said to her when the last telegram was brought in to the Château d'Esclignac, "I shall leave for Africa to-morrow."

"My dear Julia!"

"He is alive! God will not let him die. Besides, I have prayed. I believe in God, don't you?"

"Of course, my dear Julia."

"Well," said the girl, whose pale cheeks and trembling hands that held the telegram made a sincere impression on her aunt, "well, then, if you believe, why do you doubt that he is alive? Some one must find him. Will you tell Eugene to have the motor here in an hour? The boat sails to-morrow, *ma tante*."





The marquise rolled her embroidery and put it aside for twelve months. Her fine hands looked capable as she did so.

"My dear Julia, a young and handsome woman can not follow like a daughter of the regiment, after the fortunes of a soldier."

"But a Red Cross nurse can, *ma tante*, and I have my diploma."

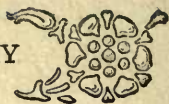
"The boat leaving to-morrow, my dear Julia, doesn't take passengers."

"Oh, *ma tante*! There will be no other boat for Algiers," she opened the newspaper, "until . . . oh, heavens!"

"But Robert de Tremont's yacht is in the harbor."

Miss Redmond looked at her aunt speechlessly.

"I shall telegraph Madame de Haussonville and ask permission for you to go in that as an auxiliary of the Red Cross to



Algiers, or, rather, Robert is at Nice. I shall telegraph him."

"Oh, *ma tante!*"

"He asked me to make up my own party for a cruise on the Mediterranean," said the Marquise d'Esclignac thoughtfully.

Miss Redmond fetched the telegraph blank and the pad from the table. The color began to return to her cheeks. She put from her mind the idea that her aunt had plans for her. All ways were fair in the present situation.

The Marquise d'Esclignac wrote her despatch, a very long one, slowly. She said to her servant:

"Call up the Villa des Perroquets at Nice. I wish to speak with the Duc de Tremont." She then drew her niece very gently to her side, looking up at her as a mother might have looked. "Darling



Julia, Monsieur de Sabron has never told you that he loved you?"

Julia shook her head.

"Not in words, *ma tante*."

There was a silence, and then Julia Redmond said:

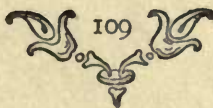
"I only want to assure myself that he is safe, that he lives. I only wish to know his fate."

"But if you go to him like this, *ma chère*, he will think you love him. He *must* marry you! You are making a serious declaration."

"Ah," breathed the girl from between trembling lips, "don't go on. I shall be shown the way."

The Marquise d'Esclignac then said, musing:

"I shall telegraph to England for provisions. Food is vile in Algiers. Also, Melanie must get out our summer clothes."





"*Ma tante!*" said Julia Redmond, "*our* summer clothes?"

"Did you think you were going alone, my dear Julia!"

She had been so thoroughly the American girl that she had thought of nothing but going. She threw her arms around her aunt's neck with an abandon that made the latter young again. The Marquise d'Esclignac kissed her niece tenderly.

"Madame la Marquise, Monsieur le Duc de Tremont is at the telephone," the servant announced to her from the doorway.

CHAPTER XV

JULIA'S ROMANCE

FROM her steamer chair the Marquise d'Esclignac asked :

"Are you absorbed in your book, Julia?"

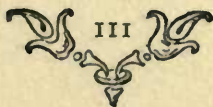
Miss Redmond faintly smiled as she laid it down. She was absorbed in but one thing, morning, noon and night, waking or sleeping: when and where she should find him; how he was being treated. Had he been taken captive? He was not dead, of that she was sure.

"What is the book, Julia?"

"Le Conte d'un Spahi."

"Put it down and let me speak to you of Robert de Tremont."

Miss Redmond, being his guest and in-





debted to him for her luxurious transportation, could not in decency refuse the request.

“He knows nothing whatever of our errand, Julia.”

“Ah, then, what does he think?”

Miss Redmond on the arm of her blue serge coat wore a band of white, in the center of which gleamed the Red Cross. The marquise, wrapped in a sable rug, held a small Pekinese lap-dog cuddled under her arm, and had only the appearance of a lady of leisure bent on a pleasure excursion. She did not suggest a rescuing party in the least. Her jaunty hat was enveloped by a delicate veil; her hands were incased in long white gloves. Now that she had encouraged her energetic niece and taken this decisive step, she relaxed and found what pleasure she might in the voyage.





"When we came on board last night, my dear, you remember that I sat with Robert in the salon until . . . well, latish."

"After midnight?"

"Possibly; but I am fifty and he is thirty. Moreover, I am his godmother. He is enchanting, Julia, spiritual and sympathetic. I confess, my dear, that I find myself rather at a loss as to what to tell him."

Miss Redmond listened politely. She was supremely indifferent as to what had been told to her host. This was Tuesday; they should reach Algiers on Saturday at the latest. What news would meet them there? She held in her book the last despatch from the ministry of war. Supposing the Captain de Sabron had been taken captive by some marauding tribe and was being held for a ransom!



HIS LOVE STORY

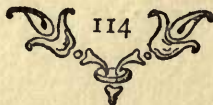


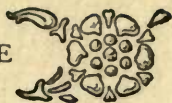
This was the *Romance of a Spahi*, in which she was absorbed. *Taken captive!* She could not let herself think what that might mean.

"Robert's mother, you know, is my closest friend. His father was one of the witnesses of my marriage. I feel that I have brought up Robert . . . it would have been *so perfect*." She sighed.

"*Ma tante!*" warned Miss Redmond, with a note of pain in her voice.

"Yes, yes," accepted the marquise, "I know, my dear, I know. But you can not escape from the yacht except in a lifeboat, and if you *did* it would be one of Robert's lifeboats! You must not be too formal with him." She tapped the nose of her Pekinese dog. "Be still, Mimi, *that* man is only a sailor! and if he were not here and at his duty you would be drowned, you little goose!"





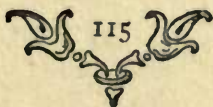
The Pekinese dog was a new addition. Julia tried not to dislike her; for Julia, only Pitchouné existed. She could not touch Mimi without a sense of disloyalty.

The boat cut the azure water with its delicate white body, the decks glistened like glass. The sailor at whom Mimi had barked passed out of sight, and far up in the bow Tremont, in white flannels, stood smoking.

"I had to be very circumspect, my dear Julia, when I talked with Robert. You see you are not engaged to Monsieur de Sabron." The girl colored. "The sentimental woman in me," her aunt went on, "has responded to all your fantasies, but the practical woman in me calls me a romantic goose."

"Ah," breathed Miss Redmond, opening her book, "*ma tante*, let me read."

"Nonsense," said the marquise affec-





tionately. "The most important part of the whole affair is that we are here—that we are en route to Algiers, is it not?"

The girl extended her hand gratefully.

"And thank you! Tell me, what did you say to him?"

The marquise hummed a little tune, and softly pulled Mimi's ears.

"Remember, my child, that if we find Monsieur de Sabron, the circumspection will have to be even greater still."

"Leave that to me, *ma tante*."

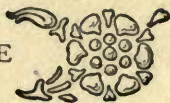
"You don't know," said the determined lady quite sweetly, "that he has the *slightest* desire to marry you, Julia."

Miss Redmond sat up in her chair, and flamed.

"Do you want to make me miserable?"

"I intend to let my worldly wisdom equal this emergency, Julia. I want Robert to have no suspicion of the facts."





"How can we prevent it, *ma tante*?"

"We can do so if you will obey me."

The girl started, and her aunt, looking up at the Duc de Tremont where he stood in the bow, saw that he showed signs of finishing his smoke and of joining them.

"*Ma tante*," said the girl quickly, "have you brought me here under false colors? Have you let him think . . ."

"Hush, Julia, you are indebted to him for accomplishing your own desire."

"But I would never, never . . ."

"*Petite sotte*," cried the marquise, "then you would *never* have been on this yacht."

Intensely troubled and annoyed, Julia asked in a low tone:

"For heaven's sake, *ma tante*, tell me what the Duc de Tremont thinks!"

Her aunt laughed softly. The intrigue and romance of it all entertained her. She



had the sense of having made a very pretty concession to her niece, of having accomplished a very agreeable pleasure trip for herself. As for young Sabron, he would be sure to be discovered at the right moment, to be lionized, decorated and advanced. The reason that she had no wrinkles on her handsome cheek was because she went lightly through life.

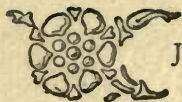
"He thinks, my dearest girl, that you are like all your countrywomen: a little eccentric and that you have a strong mind. He thinks you one of the most tender-hearted and benevolent of girls."

"Ma tante, ma tante!"

"He thinks you are making a little mission into Algiers among the sick and the wounded. He thinks you are going to sing in the hospitals."

"But," exclaimed the girl, "he must think me mad."





"Young men don't care how mildly mad a beautiful young woman is, my dear Julia."

"But, he will find out . . . he will know."

"No," said the marquise, "that he will not. I have attended to that. He will not leave his boat during the excursion, Julia. He remains, and we go on shore with our people."

"How splendid!" sighed Julia Redmond, relieved.

"I'm glad you think so," said her aunt rather shortly. "Now I have a favor to ask of you, my child."

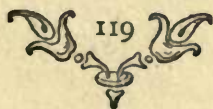
Julia trembled.

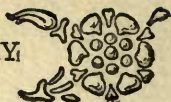
"*Ma tante?*"

"While we are on board the yacht you will treat Robert charmingly."

"I am always polite to him, am I not?"

"You are like an irritated sphinx to



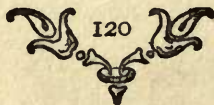


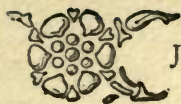
him, my dear. You must be different."

"I thought," said the girl in a subdued voice, "that it would be like this. Oh, I wish I had sailed on any vessel, even a cargo vessel."

Looking at her gently, her aunt said: "Don't be ridiculous. I only wish to protect you, my child. I think I have proved my friendship. Remember, before the world you are nothing to Charles de Sabron. A woman's heart, my dear, has delusions as well as passions."

The girl crimsoned and bowed her charming head. "You are not called upon to tell Robert de Tremont that you are in love with a man who has not asked you to marry him, but you are his guest, and all I ask of you is that you make the voyage as agreeable to him as you can, my dear."





Tremont was coming toward them.
Julia raised her head and murmured:

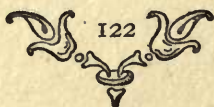
“I thank you for everything. I shall
do what I can.” And to herself she said:
“That is, as far as my honor will let me.”

CHAPTER XVI

THE DUKE IN DOUBT

THE short journey to Africa—over a calm and perfect sea, whose waters were voices at her port to solace her, and where the stars alone glowed down like friends upon her and seemed to understand—was a torture to Julia Redmond. To herself she called her aunt cruel, over and over again, and felt a prisoner, a caged creature.

Tremont found her charming, though in this rôle of Florence Nightingale, she puzzled and perplexed him. She was nevertheless adorable. The young man had the good sense to make a discreet courtship and understood she would not be easily won. Until they reached Al-





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giers, indeed, until the night before they disembarked, he had not said one word to her which might not have been shared by her aunt. In accordance with the French custom, they never were alone. The marquise shut her eyes and napped considerably and gave them every opportunity she could, but she was always present.

The Duc de Tremont had been often in love during his short life. He was a Latin and thought that women are made to be loved. It was part of his education to think this and to tell them this, and he also believed it a proof of his good taste to tell them this as soon as possible.

He was a thoroughly fine fellow. Some of his forefathers had fought and fallen in Agincourt. They had been dukes ever since. There was something distinctly noble in the blond young man, and Julia



discovered it. Possibly she had felt it from the first. Some women are keen to feel. Perhaps if she had *not* felt it she might even have hesitated to go to Algiers as his guest.

From the moment that the old duchess had said to Robert de Tremont:

"Julia Redmond is a great catch, my dear boy. I should like to have you marry her," her son answered:

"Bien, ma mère," with cheerful acquiescence, and immediately considered it and went to Tarascon, to the Château d'Esclignac. When his mother had suggested the visit, he told her that he intended making up a party for the Mediterranean.

"Why don't you take your godmother and the American girl? Miss Redmond has an income of nearly a million francs and they say she is well-bred."



"Very good, *ma mère*."

When he saw Miss Redmond he found her lovely; not so lovely as the Comtesse de la Maine, whose invitation to dinner he had refused on the day his mother suggested the Château d'Esclignac. The comtesse was a widow. It is not very, very *comme il faut* to marry a widow, in the Faubourg St.-Germain. Miss Redmond's beauty was different. She was self-absorbed and cold. He did not understand her at all, but that was the American of her.

One of his friends had married an American girl and found out afterward that she chewed gum before breakfast. *Pauvre* Raymond! Miss Redmond did not suggest such possibilities. Still she was very different to a French *jeune fille*.

With his godmother he was entirely at ease. Ever since she had paid his trifling



debts when he was a young man, he had adored her. Tremont, always discreet and almost in love with his godmother, kept her in a state of great good humor always, and when she had suggested to him this little party he had been delighted. In speaking over the telephone the Marquise d'Esclignac had said very firmly:

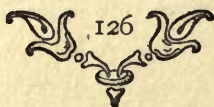
"My dear Robert, you understand that this excursion engages you to nothing."

"Oh, of course, *marraine*."

"We both need a change, and between ourselves, Julia has a little mission on foot."

Tremont would be delighted to help Miss Redmond carry it out. Whom else should he ask?

"By all means, any one you like," said his godmother diplomatically. "We want to sail the day after to-morrow." She felt safe, knowing that no worldly people





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would accept an invitation on twenty-four hours' notice.

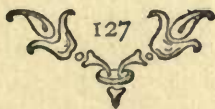
"So," the Duc de Tremont reflected, as he hung up the receiver, "Miss Redmond has a scheme, a mission! Young girls do not have schemes and missions in good French society."

"Mademoiselle," he said to her, as they walked up and down on the deck in the pale sunset, in front of the chair of the Marquise d'Esclignac, "I never saw an ornament more becoming to a woman than the one you wear."

"The ornament, Monsieur?"

"On your sleeve. It is so beautiful. A string of pearls would not be more beautiful, although your pearls are lovely, too. Are all American girls Red Cross members?"

"But of course not, Monsieur. Are all girls anywhere one thing?"





"Yes," said the Duc de Tremont, "they are all charming, but there are gradations."

"Do you think that we shall reach Algiers to-morrow, Monsieur?"

"I hope not, Mademoiselle."

Miss Redmond turned her fine eyes on him.

"You hope not?"

"I should like this voyage to last forever, Mademoiselle."

"How ridiculous!"

Her look was so frank that he laughed in spite of himself, and instead of following up the politeness, he asked:

"Why do you think of Algiers as a field for nursing the sick, Mademoiselle?"

"There has been quite a deputation of the Red Cross women lately going from Paris to the East."

"But," said the young man, "there are





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poor in Tarascon, and sick, too. There is a great deal of poverty in Nice, and Paris is the nearest of all."

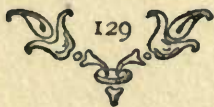
"The American girls are very imaginative," said Julia Redmond. "We must have some romance in all we do."

"I find the American girls very charming," said Tremont.

"Do you know many, Monsieur?"

"Only one," he said serenely.

Miss Redmond changed the subject quickly and cleverly, and before he knew it, Tremont was telling her stories about his own military service, which had been made in Africa. He talked well and entertained them both, and Julia Redmond listened when he told her of the desert, of its charm and its desolation, and of its dangers. An hour passed. The Marquise d'Esclignac took an ante-prandial stroll, Mimi mincing at her heels.





"*Ce pauvre* Sabron!" said Tremont. "He has disappeared off the face of the earth. What a horrible thing it was, Mademoiselle! I knew him in Paris; I remember meeting him again the night before he left the Midi. He was a fine fellow with a career before him, his friends say."

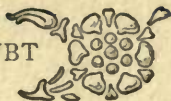
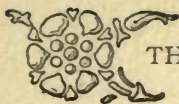
"What do you think has become of Monsieur de Sabron?"

Miss Redmond, so far, had only been able to ask this question of her aunt and of the stars. None of them had been able to tell her. Tremont shrugged his shoulders thoughtfully.

"He may have dragged himself away to die in some ambush that they have not discovered, or likely he has been taken captive, *le pauvre diable!*"

"France will do all it can, Monsieur . . ."





“They will do all they can, which is to wait. An extraordinary measure, if taken just now, would probably result in Sabron being put to death by his captors. He may be found to-morrow—he may never be found.”

A slight murmur from the young girl beside him made Tremont look at her. He saw that her hands were clasped and that her face was quite white, her eyes staring fixedly before her, out toward Africa. Tremont said:

“You are compassion itself, Mademoiselle; you have a tender heart. No wonder you wear the Red Cross. I am a soldier, Mademoiselle. I thank you for all soldiers. I thank you for Sabron . . . but, we must not talk of such things.”

He thought her very charming, both romantic and idealistic. She would make a delightful friend. Would she not be

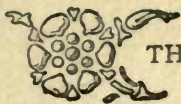


too intense for a wife? However, many women of fashion joined the Red Cross. Tremont was a commonplace man, conventional in his heart and in his tastes.

"My children," said the marquise, coming up to them with Mimi in her arms, "you are as serious as though we were on a boat bound for the North Pole and expected to live on tinned things and salt fish. Aren't you hungry, Julia? Robert, take Mimi to my maid, will you? Julia," said her aunt as Tremont went away with the little dog, "you look dramatic, my dear, you're pale as death in spite of this divine air and this enchanting sea." She linked her arm through her niece's. "Take a brisk walk with me for five minutes and whip up your blood. I believe you were on the point of making Tremont some unwise confession."

"I assure you no, *ma tante*."





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"Isn't Bob a darling, Julia?"

"Awfully," returned her niece absent-mindedly.

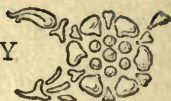
"He's the most eligible young man in Paris, Julia, and the most difficult to please."

"*Ma tante*," said the girl in a low tone, "he tells me that France at present can do practically nothing about finding Monsieur de Sabron. Fancy a great army and a great nation helpless for the rescue of a single soldier, and his life at stake!"

"Julia," said the marquise, taking the trembling hand in her own, "you will make yourself ill, my darling, and you will be no use to any one, you know."

"You're right," returned the girl, "I will be silent and I will only pray."

She turned from her aunt to stand for a few moments quiet, looking out at the sea, at the blue water through which the



boat cut and flew. Along the horizon was a mist, rosy and translucent, and out of it white Algiers would shine before many hours.

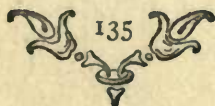
When Tremont, at luncheon a little later, looked at his guests, he saw a new Julia. She had left her coat with the Red Cross in her cabin with her hat. In her pretty blouse, her pearls around her neck, the soft flush on her cheeks, she was apparently only a light-hearted woman of the world. She teased her aunt gently, she laughed very deliciously and lightly flirted with the Duc de Tremont, who opened a bottle of champagne. The Marquise d'Esclignac beamed upon her niece. Tremont found her more puzzling than ever. "She suggests the chameleon," he thought, "she has moods. Before, she was a tragic muse; at luncheon she is an adorable sybarite."

CHAPTER XVII

OUT OF THE DESERT

FROM a dreamy little villa, whose walls were streaming with bougainvillea, Miss Redmond looked over Algiers, over the tumult and hum of it, to the sea. Tremont, by her side, looked at her. From head to foot the girl was in white. On one side the bougainvillea laid its scarlet flowers against the stainless linen of her dress, and on her other arm was the Red Cross.

The American girl and the Frenchman had become the best of friends. She considered him a sincere companion and an unconscious confederate. He had not yet decided what he thought of her, or how.





His promise to remain on the yacht had been broken and he paid his godmother and Miss Redmond constant visits at their villa, which the marquise rented for the season.

There were times when Tremont thought Miss Redmond's exile a fanatical one, but he always found her fascinating and a lovely woman, and he wondered what it was that kept him from laying his title and his fortune at her feet. It had been understood between the godmother and himself that he was to court Miss Redmond *à l'américaine*.

"She has been brought up in such a shocking fashion, Robert, that nothing but American love-making will appeal to her. You will have to make love to her, Robert. Can you do it?"

"But, *marraine*, I might as well make love to a sister of charity."





"There was *la Belle Heloise*, and no woman is immune."

"I think she is engaged to some American cowboy who will come and claim her, *marraine*."

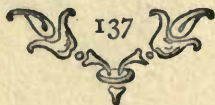
His godmother was offended.

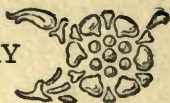
"Rubbish!" she said. "She is engaged to no one, Bob. She is an idealist, a Rosalind; but that will not prevent her from making an excellent wife."

"She is certainly very beautiful," said the Duc de Tremont, and he told Julia so.

"You are very beautiful," said the Duc de Tremont to Miss Redmond, as she leaned on the balcony of the villa. The bougainvillea leaned against her breast. "When you stood in the hospital under the window and sang to the poor devils, you looked like an angel."

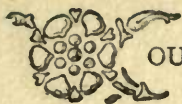
"Poor things!" said Julia Redmond. "Do you think that they liked it?"





“Liked it!” exclaimed the young man enthusiastically, “couldn’t you see by their faces? One poor devil said to me: ‘One can die better now, Monsieur.’ There was no hope for him, it seems.”

Tremont and the Marquise d’Esclignac had docilely gone with Julia Redmond every day at a certain hour to the different hospitals, where Julia, after rendering some slight services to the nurses—for she was not needed—sang for the sick, standing in the outer hallway of the building open on every side. She knew that Sabron was not among these sick. Where he was or what sounds his ears might hear, she could not know; but she sang for him, and the fact put a sweetness in her voice that touched the ears of the suffering and uplifted those who were not too far down to be uplifted, and as for



OUT OF THE DESERT



the dying, it helped them, as the soldier said, to die.

She had done this for several days, but now she was restless. Sabron was not in Algiers. No news had been brought of him. His regiment had been ordered out farther into the desert that seemed to stretch away into infinity, and the vast cruel sands knew, and the stars knew where Sabron had fallen and what was his history, and they kept the secret.

The marquise made herself as much at home as possible in Algiers, put up with the inefficiency of native servants, and her duty was done. Her first romantic élan was over. Sabron had recalled to her the idyl of a love-affair of a quarter of a century before, but she had been for too long the Marquise d'Esclignac to go back to an ideal. She pined to have her



niece a duchess, and never spoke the unfortunate Sabron's name.

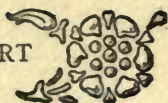
They were surrounded by fashionable life. As soon as their arrival had been made known there had been a flutter of cards and a passing of carriages and automobiles, and this worldly life added to the unhappiness and restlessness of Julia. Among the guests had been one woman whom she found sympathetic; the woman's eyes had drawn Julia to her. It was the Comtesse de la Maine, a widow, young as herself and, as Julia said, vastly better-looking. Turning to Tremont on the balcony, when he told her she was beautiful, she said:

"Madame de la Maine is my ideal of loveliness."

The young man wrinkled his fair brow.

"Do you think so, Mademoiselle? Why?"





"She has character as well as perfect lines. Her eyes look as though they could weep and laugh. Her mouth looks as though it could say adorable things."

Tremont laughed softly and said:

"Go on, you amuse me."

"And her hands look as though they could caress and comfort. I like her awfully. I wish she were my friend."

Tremont said nothing, and she glanced at him suddenly.

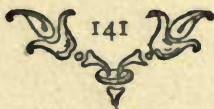
"She says such lovely things about you, Monsieur."

"Really! She is too indulgent."

"Don't be worldly," said Miss Redmond gravely, "be human. I like you best so. Don't you agree with me?"

"Madame de la Maine is a very charming woman," said the young man, and the girl saw a change come over his features.

At this moment, as they stood so to-





gether, Tremont pulling his mustache and looking out through the bougainvillea vines, a dark figure made its way through the garden to the villa, came and took its position under the balcony where the duke and Miss Redmond leaned. It was a native, a man in filthy rags. He turned his face to Tremont and bowed low to the lady.

"Excellency," he said in broken French, "my name is Hammet Abou. I was the *ordonnance* of Monsieur le Capitaine de Sabron."

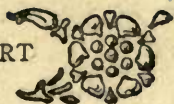
"What!" exclaimed Tremont, "what did you say?"

"Ask him to come up here," said Julia Redmond, "or, no—let us go down to the garden."

"It is damp," said Tremont, "let me get you a shawl."

"No, no, I need nothing."





She had hurried before him down the little stairs leading into the garden from the balcony, and she had begun to speak to the native before Tremont appeared. In this recital he addressed his words to Julia alone.

"I am a very poor man, Excellency," he said in a mellifluous tone, "and very sick."

"Have you any money, Monsieur?"

"Pray do not suggest it," said the duke sharply. "Let him tell what he will; we will pay him later."

"I have been very sick," said the man. "I have left the army. I do not like the French army," said the native simply.

"You are very frank," said Tremont brutally. "Why do you come here at any rate?"

"Hush," said Julia Redmond imploringly. "Do not anger him, Monsieur, he may have news." She asked: "Have you



news?" and there was a note in her voice that made Tremont glance at her.

"I have seen the excellency and her grandmother," said the native, "many times going into the garrison."

"What news have you of Captain de Sabron?" asked the girl directly. Without replying, the man said in a melancholy voice:

"I was his *ordonnance*, I saw him fall in the battle of Dirbal. I saw him shot in the side. I was shot, too. See?"

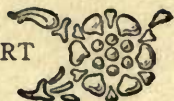
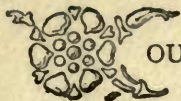
He started to pull away his rags. Tremont clutched him.

"You beast," he muttered, and pushed him back. "If you have anything to say, say it."

Looking at Julia Redmond's colorless face, the native asked meaningly:

"Does the excellency wish any news?"





"Yes," said Tremont, shaking him.
"And if you do not give it, it will be the worse for you."

"Monsieur le Capitaine fell, and I fell, too; I saw no more."

Tremont said:

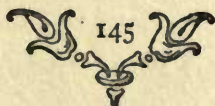
"You see the fellow is half lunatic and probably knows nothing about Sabron. I shall put him out of the garden."

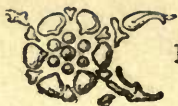
But Miss Redmond paid no attention to her companion. She controlled her voice and asked the man:

"Was the Capitaine de Sabron alone?"

"Except," said the native steadily, with a glance of disgust at the duke, "except for his little dog."

"Ah!" exclaimed Julia Redmond, with a catch in her voice, "do you hear that? He must have been his servant. What was the dog's name?"





"My name," said the native, "is Hammet Abou."

To her at this moment Hammet Abou was the most important person in North Africa.

"What was the little dog's name, Hammet Abou?"

The man raised his eyes and looked at the white woman with admiration.

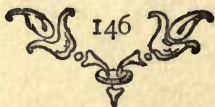
"Pitchouné," he said, and saw the effect.

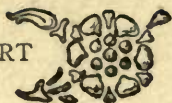
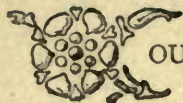
Tremont saw the effect upon her, too.

"I have a wife and ten children," said the man, "and I live far away."

"Heavens! I haven't my purse," said Julia Redmond. "Will you not give him something, Monsieur?"

"Wait," said Tremont, "wait. What else do you know? If your information is worth anything to us we will pay you, don't be afraid."





"Perhaps the excellency's grandmother would like to hear, too," said the man naively.

Julia Redmond smiled: the youthful Marquise d'Esclignac!

Once more Tremont seized the man by the arm and shook him a little.

"If you don't tell what you have to say and be quick about it, my dear fellow, I shall hand you over to the police."

"What for?" said the man, "what have I done?"

"Well, what have you got to tell, and how much do you want for it?"

"I want one hundred francs for this," and he pulled out from his dirty rags a little packet and held it up cautiously.

It looked like a package of letters and a man's pocketbook.

"You take it," said the Duc de Tremont to Julia Redmond, "you take it,



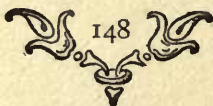
Mademoiselle." She did so without hesitation; it was evidently Sabron's pocket-book, a leather one with his initials upon it, together with a little package of letters. On the top she saw her letter to him. Her hand trembled so that she could scarcely hold the package. It seemed to be all that was left to her. She heard Tremont ask:

"Where did you get this, you miserable dog?"

"After the battle," said the man coolly, with evident truthfulness, "I was very sick. We were in camp several days at ———. Then I got better and went along the dried river bank to look for Monsieur le Capitaine, and I found this in the sands."

"Do you believe him?" asked Julia Redmond.

"Hum," said Tremont. He did not wish to tell her he thought the man capa-





ble of robbing the dead body of his master. He asked the native: "Have you no other news?"

The man was silent. He clutched the rags at his breast and looked at Julia Redmond.

"Please give him some money, Monsieur."

"The dog!" Tremont shook him again. "Not yet." And he said to the man: "If this is all you have to tell we will give you one hundred francs for this parcel. You can go and don't return here again."

"But it is not all," said the native quietly, looking at Julia.

Her heart began to beat like mad and she looked at the man. His keen dark eyes seemed to pierce her.

"Monsieur," said the American girl boldly, "would you leave me a moment



with him? I think he wants to speak with me alone."

But the Duc de Tremont exclaimed in surprise:

"To speak with you alone, Mademoiselle! Why should he? Such a thing is not possible!"

"Don't go far," she begged, "but leave us a moment, I pray."

When Tremont, with great hesitation, took a few steps away from them and she stood face to face with the creature who had been with Sabron and seen him fall, she said earnestly:

"Now speak without reserve. Tell me everything."

The face of the man was transformed. He became human, devoted, ardent.

"Excellency," he said swiftly in his halting French, "I loved Monsieur le





Capitaine. He was so kind and such a brave soldier. I want to go to find Monsieur le Capitaine, but I am ill and too weak to walk. I believe I know where he is hid—I want to go.”

The girl breathed:

“Oh, can it be possible that what you say is true, Hammet Abou? Would you really go if you could?”

The man made, with a graceful gesture of his hand, a map in the air.

“It was like this,” he said; “I think he fell into the bed of an old river. I think he drew himself up the bank. I followed the track of his blood. I was too weak to go any farther, Excellency.”

“And how could you go now?” she asked.

“By caravan, like a merchant, secretly. I would find him.”





Julia Redmond put out a slim hand, white as a gardenia. The native lifted it and touched his forehead with it.

"Hammet Abou," she said, "go away for to-night and come to-morrow—we will see you." And without waiting to speak again to Monsieur de Tremont, the native slid away out of the garden like a shadow, as though his limbs were not weak with disease and his breast shattered by shot.

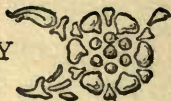
When Monsieur de Tremont had walked once around the garden, keeping his eyes nevertheless on the group, he came back toward Julia Redmond, but not quickly enough, for she ran up the stairs and into the house with Sabron's packet in her hand.

CHAPTER XVIII

TWO LOVELY WOMEN

THERE was music at the Villa des Bougainvilleas. Miss Redmond sang; not *Good-night, God Keep You Safe*, but other things. Ever since her talk with Hammet Abou she had been, if not gay, in good spirits, more like her old self, and the Marquise d'Esclignac began to think that the image of Charles de Sabron had not been cut too deeply upon her mind. The marquise, from the lounge in the shadow of the room, enjoyed the picture (Sabron would not have added it to his collection) of her niece at the piano and the Duc de Tremont by her side. The Comtesse de la Maine sat in a little shadow of her own, musing and enjoying the picture of the Duc de Tremont





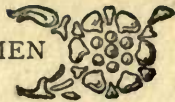
and Miss Redmond very indifferently. She did not sing; she had no parlor accomplishments. She was poor, a widow, and had a child. She was not a brilliant match.

From where he stood, Tremont could see the Comtesse de la Maine in her little shadow, the oriental decorations a background to her slight Parisian figure, and a little out of the shadow, the bright aigret in her hair danced, shaking its sparkles of fire. She looked infinitely sad and infinitely appealing. One bare arm was along the back of her lounge. She leaned her head upon her hand.

After a few moments the Duc de Tremont quietly left the piano and Miss Redmond, and went and sat down beside the Comtesse de la Maine, who, in order to make a place for him, moved out of the shadow.

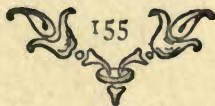


TWO LOVELY WOMEN



Julia, one after another, played songs she loved, keeping her fingers resolutely from the notes that wanted to run into a single song, the music, the song that linked her to the man whose life had become a mystery. She glanced at the Duc de Tremont and the Comtesse de la Maine. She glanced at her aunt, patting Mimi, who, freshly washed, adorned by pale blue ribbon, looked disdainful and princely, and with passion and feeling she began to sing the song that seemed to reach beyond the tawdry room of the villa in Algiers, and to go into the desert, trying in sweet intensity to speak and to comfort, and as she sat so singing to one man, Sabron would have adored adding that picture to his collection.

The servant came up to the marquise and gave her a message. The lady rose, beckoned Tremont to follow her, and





went out on the veranda, followed by Mimi. Julia stopped playing and went over to the Comtesse de la Maine.

"Where have my aunt and Monsieur de Tremont gone, Madame?"

"To see some one who has come to suggest a camel excursion, I believe."

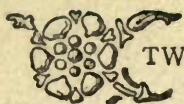
"He chooses a curious hour."

"Everything is curious in the East, Mademoiselle," returned the comtesse. "I feel as though my own life were turned upside down."

"We are not far enough in the East for that," smiled Julia Redmond. She regarded the comtesse with her frank girlish scrutiny. There was in it a fine truthfulness and utter disregard of all the barriers that long epochs of etiquette put between souls.

Julia Redmond knew nothing of





TWO LOVELY WOMEN



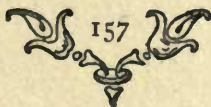
French society and of the deference due to the arts of the old world. She knew, perhaps, very little of anything. She was young and unschooled. She knew, as some women know, how to feel, and how to be, and how to love. She was as honest as her ancestors, among whose traditions is the story that one of them could never tell a lie.

Julia Redmond sat beside the Comtesse de la Mainé, whose elegance she admired enormously, and taking one of the lady's hands, with a frank liking she asked in her rich young voice:

"Why do you tolerate me, Madame?"

"*Ma chère enfant*," exclaimed the comtesse. "Why, you are adorable."

"It is terribly good of you to say so," murmured Julia Redmond. "It shows how generous you are."





"But you attribute qualities to me I do not deserve, Mademoiselle."

"You deserve them and much more, Madame. I loved you the first day I saw you; no one could help loving you."

Julia Redmond was irresistible. The Comtesse de la Maine had remarked her caprices, her moods, her sadness. She had seen that the good spirits were false and, as keen women do, she had attributed it to a love-affair with the Duc de Tremont. The girl's frankness was contagious. The Comtesse de la Maine murmured:

"I think the same of you, *ma chère, vous êtes charmante.*"

Julia Redmond shook her head. She did not want compliments. The eyes of the two women met and read each other.

"Couldn't you be frank with me, Madame? It is so easy to be frank."

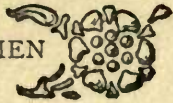


— Joseph Charles Cressy —





TWO LOVELY WOMEN



It was, indeed, impossible for Julia Redmond to be anything else. The comtesse, who was only a trifle older than the young girl, felt like her mother just then. She laughed.

"But be frank—about what?"

"You see," said Julia Redmond swiftly, "I care absolutely nothing for the Duc de Tremont, nothing."

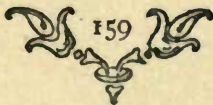
"You don't *love* him?" returned Madame de la Maine, with deep accentuation. "Is it possible?"

The girl smiled.

"Yes, quite possible. I think he is a perfect dear. He is a splendid friend and I am devoted to him, but I don't love him at all, not at all."

"Ah!" breathed Madame de la Maine, and she looked at the American girl guardedly.

For a moment it was like a passage of





arms between a frank young Indian chief and a Jesuit. Julia, as it were, shook her feathers and her beads.

"And I don't care in the *least* about being a duchess! My father made his money in oil. I am not an aristocrat like my aunt," she said.

"Then," said the Comtesse de la Maine, forgetting that she was a Jesuit, "you will marry Robert de Tremont simply to please your aunt?"

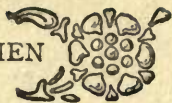
"But nothing on earth would induce me to marry him!" cried Julia Redmond. "That's what I'm telling you, Madame. I don't love him!"

The Comtesse de la Maine looked at her companion and bit her lip. She blushed more warmly than is permitted in the Faubourg St.-Germain, but she was young and the western influence is pernicious.





TWO LOVELY WOMEN



"I saw at once that you loved him," said Julia Redmond frankly. "That's why I speak as I do."

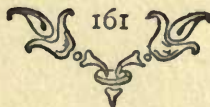
The Comtesse de la Maine drew back and exclaimed.

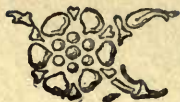
"Oh," said Julia Redmond, "don't deny it. I shan't like you half so well if you do. There is no shame in being in love, is there?—especially when the man you love, loves you."

The Comtesse de la Maine broke down, or, rather, she rose high. She rose above all the smallness of convention and the rules of her French formal education.

"You are wonderful," she said, laughing softly, her eyes full of tears. "Will you tell me what makes you think that he is fond of me?"

"But you know it so well," said Julia. "Hasn't he cared for you for a long time?"





Madame de la Maine wondered just how much Julia Redmond had heard, and as there was no way of finding out, she said graciously :

"He has seemed to love me very dearly for many years ; but I am poor ; I have a child. He is ambitious and he is the Duc de Tremont."

"Nonsense," said Julia. "He loves you. That's all that counts. You will be awfully happy. You will marry the Duc de Tremont, won't you? There's a dear."

"Happy," murmured the other woman, "happy, my dear friend, I never dreamed of such a thing!"

"Dream of it now," said Julia Redmond swiftly, "for it will come true."

CHAPTER XIX

THE MAN IN RAGS

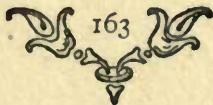
THE Marquise d'Esclignac, under the stars, interviewed the native soldier, the beggar, the man in rags, at the foot of the veranda. There was a moon as well as stars, and the man was distinctly visible in all his squalor.

"What on earth is he talking about, Robert?"

"About Sabron, *marraine*," said her godson laconically.

The Marquise d'Esclignac raised her lorgnon and said:

"Speak, man! What do you know about Monsieur de Sabron? See, he is covered with dirt—has leprosy, probably." But she did not withdraw. She





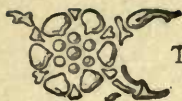
was a great lady and stood her ground. She did not know what the word "squeamish" meant.

Listening to the man's jargon and putting many things together, Tremont at last turned to the Marquise d'Esclignac who was sternly fixing the beggar with her haughty condescension:

"*Marraine*, he says that Sabron is alive, in the hands of natives in a certain district where there is no travel, in the heart of the seditious tribes. He says that he has friends in a caravan of merchants who once a year pass the spot where this native village is."

"The man's a lunatic," said the Marquise d'Esclignac calmly. "Get Abimelec and put him out of the garden, Robert. You must not let Julia hear of this."

"*Marraine*," said Tremont quietly, "Mademoiselle Redmond has already



seen this man. He has come to see her to-night."

"How perfectly horrible!" said the Marquise d'Esclignac. Then she asked rather weakly of Tremont: "Don't you think so?"

"Well, I think," said Tremont, "that the only interesting thing is the truth there may be in what this man says. If Sabron is a captive, and he knows anything about it, we must use his information for all it is worth."

"Of course," said the Marquise d'Esclignac, "of course. The war department must be informed at once. Why hasn't he gone there?"

"He has explained," said Tremont, "that the only way Sabron can be saved is that he shall be found by outsiders. One hint to his captors would end his life."

"Oh!" said the Marquise d'Esclignac



"I don't know what to do, Bob! What part can we take in this?"

Tremont pulled his mustache. Mimi had circled round the beggar, snuffing at his slippers and his robe. The man made no objection to the little creature, to the fluffy ball surrounded by a huge bow, and Mimi sat peacefully down in the moonlight, at the beggar's feet.

"Mimi seems to like him," said the Marquise d'Esclignac helplessly, "she is very particular."

"She finds that he has a serious and convincing manner," said Tremont.

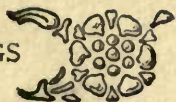
Now the man, who had been a silent listener to the conversation, said in fairly comprehensible English to the Marquise d'Esclignac:

"If the beautiful grandmother could have seen the Capitaine de Sabron on the night before the battle—"





THE MAN IN RAGS



“Grandmother, indeed!” exclaimed the marquise indignantly. “Come, Mimi! Robert, finish with this creature and get what satisfaction you can from him. I believe him to be an impostor; at any rate, he does not expect *me* to mount a camel or to lead a caravan to the rescue.”

Tremont put Mimi in her arms; she folded her lorgnon and sailed majestically away, like a highly decorated pinnacle with silk sails, and Tremont, in the moonlight, continued to talk with the sincere and convincing Hammet Abou.

CHAPTER XX

JULIA DECIDES

NOW the young girl had his letters and her own to read. They were sweet and sad companions and she laid them side by side. She did not weep, because she was not of the weeping type; she had hope.

Her spirits remained singularly even. Madame de la Maine had given her a great deal to live on.

"Julia, what have you done to Robert?"

"Nothing, *ma tante*."

"He has quite changed. This excursion to Africa has entirely altered him. He is naturally so gay," said the Marquise d'Esclignac. "Have you refused him, Julia?"





"*Ma tante*, he has not asked me to be the Duchess de Tremont."

Her aunt's voice was earnest.

"Julia, do you wish to spoil your life and your chances of happiness? Do you wish to mourn for a dead soldier who has never been more than an acquaintance? I won't even say a *friend*."

What she said sounded logical.

"*Ma tante*, I do not think of Monsieur de Sabron as dead, you know."

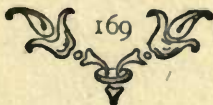
"Well, in the event that he may be, my dear Julia."

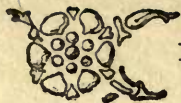
"Sometimes," said the girl, drawing near to her aunt and taking the older lady's hand quietly and looking in her eyes, "sometimes, *ma tante*, you are cruel."

The marquise kissed her and sighed:

"Robert's mother will be so unhappy!"

"But she has never seen me, *ma tante*."





She trusts my taste, Julia."

"There should be more than 'taste' in a matter of husband and wife, *ma tante*."

After a moment, in which the Marquise d'Esclignac gazed at the bougainvillea and wondered how any one could admire its crude and vulgar color, Miss Redmond asked:

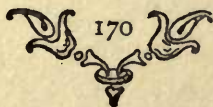
"Did you ever think that the Duc de Tremont was in love?"

Turning shortly about to her niece, her aunt stared at her.

"In love, my dear!"

"With Madame de la Maine."

The arrival of Madame de la Maine had been a bitter blow to the Marquise d'Esclignac. The young woman was, however, much loved in Paris and quite in the eye of the world. There was no possible reason why the Marquise d'Esclignac should avoid her.





JULIA DECIDES



"You have been hearing gossip, Julia."

"I have been watching a lovely woman," said the girl simply, "and a man. That's all. You wouldn't want me to marry a man who loves another woman, *ma tante*, when the woman loves him and when I love another man?"

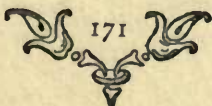
She laughed and kissed her aunt's cheek.

"Let us think of the soldier," she murmured, "let us think just of *him*, *ma tante*, will you not?"

The Marquise d'Esclignac struck her colors.

In the hallway of the villa, in a snowy gibbeh, (and his clean-washed appearance was much in his favor) Hammet Abou waited to talk with the "grandmother" and the excellency.

He pressed both his hands to his forehead and his breast as the ladies entered





the vestibule. There was a stagnant odor of myrrh and sandalwood in the air. The marble vestibule was cool and dark, the walls hung with high-colored stuffs, the windows drawn to keep out the heat.

The Duc de Tremont and Madame de la Maine came out of the salon together. Tremont nodded to the Arab.

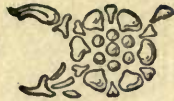
"I hope you are a little less—" and he touched his forehead smiling, "to-day, my friend."

"I am as God made me, Monsieur."

"What have you got to-day?" asked Julia Redmond anxiously, fixing her eager eyes upon Hammet.

It seemed terrible to her that this man should stand there with a vital secret and that they should not all be at his feet. He glanced boldly around at them.

"There are no soldiers here?"



"No, no, you may speak freely."

The man went forward to Tremont and put a paper in his hands, unfolding it like a chart.

"This is what monsieur asked me for—a plan of the battle-field. This is the battle-field, and this is the desert."

Tremont took the chart. On the page was simply a round circle, drawn in red ink, with a few Arabian characters and nothing else. Hammet Abou traced the circle with his fingers tipped with henna.

"That was the battle, Monsieur."

"But this is no chart, Hammet Abou."

The other continued, unmoved:

"And all the rest is a desert, like this."

Tremont, over the man's snowy turban, glanced at the others and shrugged. Every one but Julia Redmond thought he was insane. She came up to him where



he stood close to Tremont. She said very slowly in French, compelling the man's dark eyes to meet hers:

"You don't wish to tell us, Hammet Abou, anything more. Am I not right? You don't wish us to know the truth."

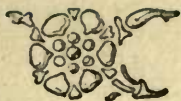
Now it was the American pitted against the Oriental. The Arab, with deference, touched his forehead before her.

"If I made a true plan," he said coolly, "your excellency could give it to-morrow to the government."

"Just what should be done, Julia," said the Marquise d'Esclignac, in English. "This man should be arrested at once."

"*Ma tante*," pleaded Julia Redmond.

She felt as though a slender thread was between her fingers, a thread which led her to the door of a labyrinth and which a rude touch might cause her to lose forever.



JULIA DECIDES



"If you had money would you start out to find Monsieur de Sabron at once?"

"It would cost a great deal, Excellency."

"You shall have all the money you need. Do you think you would be able to find your way?"

"Yes, Excellency."

The Duc de Tremont watched the American girl. She was bartering with an Arabian for the salvation of a poor officer. What an enthusiast! He had no idea she had ever seen Sabron more than once or twice in her life. He came forward.

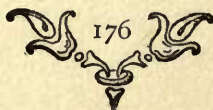
"Let me talk to this man," he said with authority, and Julia Redmond did not dispute him.

In a tone different from the light and mocking one that he had hitherto used to the Arab, Tremont began to ask a dozen



questions severely, and in his answers to the young Frenchman, Hammet Abou began to make a favorable impression on every one save the Marquise d'Esclignac, who did not understand him. There was a huge bamboo chair on a dais under a Chinese pagoda, and the Marquise d'Esclignac took the chair and sat upright as on a throne. Mimi, who had just been fed, came in tinkling her little bells and fawned at the sandals on Hammet Abou's bare feet. After talking with the native, Tremont said to his friends:

"This man says that if he joins a Jewish caravan, which leaves here to-morrow at sundown, he will be taken with these men and leave the city without suspicion, but he must share the expenses of the whole caravan. The expedition will not be without danger; it must be entered into with great subtlety. He is either," said





JULIA DECIDES



Tremont, "an impostor or a remarkable man."

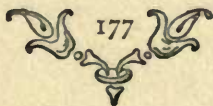
"He is an impostor, of course," murmured the Marquise d'Esclignac. "Come here, Mimi."

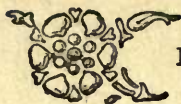
Tremont went on:

"Further he will not disclose to us. He has evidently some carefully laid plan for rescuing Sabron."

There was a pause. Hammet Abou, his hands folded peacefully across his breast, waited. Julia Redmond waited. The Comtesse de la Maine, in her pretty voice, asked quickly:

"But, *mes amis*, there is a man's life at stake! Why do we stand here talking in the antechamber? Evidently the war office has done all it can for the Capitaine de Sabron. But they have not found him. Whether this fellow is crazy or not, he has a wonderful hypothesis."





A brilliant look of gratitude crossed Julia Redmond's face. She glanced at the Comtesse de la Maine.

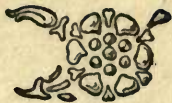
"Ah, she's got the heart!" she said to herself. "I knew it." She crossed the hall to the Comtesse de la Maine and slipped her arm in hers.

"Has Monsieur de Sabron no near family?"

"No," said the Marquise d'Esclignac from her throne. "He is one of those unfamilied beings who, when they are once taken into other hearts are all the dearer because of their orphaned state."

Her tone was not unkind. It was affectionate.

"Now, my good man," she said to Hammet Abou, in a language totally incomprehensible to him, "money is no object in this question, but what will you do with Monsieur de Sabron if you find him?"



He may be an invalid, and the ransom will be fabulous."

The Comtesse de la Mainé felt the girl's arm in hers tremble. Hammet Abou answered none of these questions, for he did not understand them. He said quietly to Tremont:

"The caravan starts to-morrow at sundown and there is much to do."

Tremont stood pulling his mustache. He looked boyish and charming, withal serious beyond his usual habit. His eyes wandered over to the corner where the two women stood together.

"I intend to go with you, Hammet Abou," said he slowly, "if it can be arranged. Otherwise this expedition does not interest me."

Two women said:

"Oh, heavens!" at once.

Robert de Tremont heard the note of



anxiety in the younger voice alone. He glanced at the Comtesse de la Maine.

"You are quite right, Madame," he said, "a man's life is at stake and we stand chaffing here. I know something of what the desert is and what the natives are. Sabron would be the first to go if it were a question of a brother officer."

The Marquise d'Esclignac got down from her throne, trembling. Her eyes were fixed upon her niece.

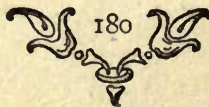
"Julia," she began, and stopped.

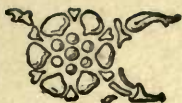
Madame de la Maine said nothing.

"Robert, you are my godson, and I forbid it. Your mother—"

"—is one of the bravest women I ever knew," said her godson. "My father was a soldier."

Julia withdrew her arm from the Comtesse de la Maine as though to leave her free.





JULIA DECIDES



"Then you two girls," said the Marquise d'Esclignac, thoroughly American for a moment, "must forbid him to go." She fixed her eyes sternly upon her niece, with a glance of entreaty and reproach. Miss Redmond said in a firm voice:

"In Monsieur de Tremont's case I should do exactly what he proposes."

"But he is risking his life," said the Marquise d'Esclignac. "He is not even an intimate friend of Monsieur de Sabron!"

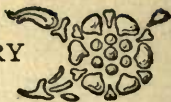
Tremont said, smiling:

"You tell us that he has no brother, *marraine*. *Eh bien*, I will pass as his brother."

A thrill touched Julia Redmond's heart. She almost loved him. If, as her aunt had said, Sabron had been out of the question . . .

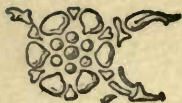
"Madame de la Maine," said the Mar-





quise d'Esclignac, her hands shaking, "I appeal to you to divert this headstrong young man from his purpose."

The Comtesse de la Maine was the palest of the three women. She had been quietly looking at Tremont and now a smile crossed her lips that had tears back of it—one of those beautiful smiles that mean so much on a woman's face. She was the only one of the three who had not yet spoken. Tremont was waiting for her. Hammet Abou, with whom he had been in earnest conversation, was answering his further questions. The Marquise d'Esclignac shrugged, threw up her hands as though she gave up all questions of romance, rescue and disappointed love and foolish girls, and walked out thoroughly wretched, Mimi tinkling at her heels. The Comtesse de la Maine said to Julia:



JULIA DECIDES



"*Ma chère*, what were the words of the English song you sang last night—the song you told me was a sort of prayer. Tell me the words slowly, will you?"

They walked out of the vestibule together, leaving Hammet Abou and Tremont alone.

CHAPTER XXI

MASTER AND FRIEND

PITCHOUNE, who might have been considered as one of the infinitesimal atoms in the economy of the universe, ran over the sands away from his master. He was an infinitesimal dot on the desert's face. He was only a small Irish terrier in the heart of the Sahara. His little wiry body and his color seemed to blend with the dust. His eyes were dimmed by hunger and thirst and exhaustion, but there was the blood of a fighter in him and he was a thoroughbred. Nevertheless, he was running away. It looked very much like it. There was no one to comment on his treachery; had there been, Pitchouné would not have run far.

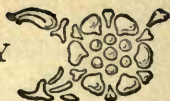




It was not an ordinary sight to see on the Sahara—a small Irish terrier going as fast as he could.

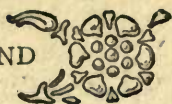
Pitchouné ran with his nose to the ground. There were several trails for a dog to follow on that apparently untrodden page of desert history. Which one would he choose? Without a scent a dog does nothing. His nostrils are his instinct. His devotion, his faithfulness, his intelligence, his heart—all come through his nose. A man's heart, they say, is in his stomach—or in his pocket. A dog's is in his nostrils. If Pitchouné had chosen the wrong direction, this story would never have been written. Michette did not give birth to the sixth puppy, in the stables of the garrison, for nothing. Nor had Sabron saved him on the night of the memorable dinner for nothing.

With his nose flat to the sands Pit-



chouné smelt to east and to west, to north and south, took a scent to the east, decided on it—for what reason will never be told—and followed it. Fatigue and hunger were forgotten as hour after hour Pitchouné ran across the Sahara. Mercifully, the sun had been clouded by the precursor of a wind-storm. The air was almost cool. Mercifully, the wind did not arise until the little terrier had pursued his course to the end.

There are occasions when an animal's intelligence surpasses the human. When, toward evening of the twelve hours that it had taken him to reach a certain point, he came to a settlement of mud huts on the borders of an oasis, he was pretty nearly at the end of his strength. The oasis was the only sign of life in five hundred miles. There was very little left in his small body. He lay down, panting, but his



bright spirit was unwilling just then to leave his form and hovered near him. In the religion of Tatman dogs alone have souls.

Pitchouné panted and dragged himself to a pool of water around which the green palms grew, and he drank and drank. Then the little desert wayfarer hid himself in the bushes and slept till morning. All night he was racked with convulsive twitches, but he slept and in his dreams, he killed a young chicken and ate it. In the morning he took a bath in the pool, and the sun rose while he swam in the water.

If Sabron or Miss Redmond could have seen him he would have seemed the epitome of heartless egoism. He was the epitome of wisdom. Instinct and wisdom sometimes go closely together. Solomon was only instinctive when he asked



HIS LOVE STORY



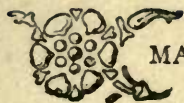
for wisdom. The epicurean Lucullus, when dying, asked for a certain Nile fish cooked in wine.

Pitchouné shook out his short hairy body and came out of the oasis pool into the sunlight and trotted into the Arabian village.

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Fatou Anni parched corn in a brazier before her house. Her house was a mud hut with yellow walls. It had no roof and was open to the sky. Fatou Anni was ninety years old, straight as a lance—straight as one of the lances the men of the village carried when they went to dispute with white people. These lances with which the young men had fought, had won them the last battle. They had been victorious on the field.

Fatou Anni was the grandmother of many men. She had been the mother of



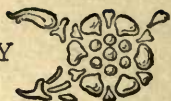
many men. Now she parched corn tranquilly, prayerfully.

“Allah! that the corn should not burn; Allah! that it should be sweet; Allah! that her men should be always successful.”

She was the fetish of the settlement. In a single blue garment, her black scrawny breast uncovered, the thin veil that the Fellaheen wear pushed back from her face, her fine eyes were revealed and she might have been a priestess as she bent over her corn!

“Allah! Allah Akbar!”

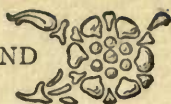
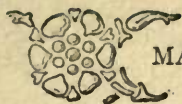
Rather than anything should happen to Fatou Anni, the settlement would have roasted its enemies alive, torn them in shreds. Some of them said that she was two hundred years old. There was a charmed ring drawn around her house. People supposed that if any creature crossed it uninvited, it would fall dead.



The sun had risen for an hour and the air was still cool. Overhead, the sky, unstained by a single cloud, was blue as a turquoise floor, and against it, black and portentous, flew the vultures. Here and there the sun-touched pools gave life and reason to the oasis.

Fatou Anni parched her corn. Her barbaric chant was interrupted by a sharp bark and a low pleading whine.

She had never heard sounds just like that. The dogs of the village were great wolf-like creatures. Pitchouné's bark was angelic compared with theirs. He crossed the charmed circle drawn around her house, and did not fall dead, and stood before her, whining. Fatou Anni left her corn, stood upright and looked at Pitchouné. To her the Irish terrier was an apparition. The fact that he had not fallen dead proved that he was beloved of



Allah. He was, perhaps, a genie, an afrit.

Pitchouné fawned at her feet. She murmured a line of the *Koran*. It did not seem to affect his demonstrative affection. The woman bent down to him after making a pass against the Evil Eye, and touched him, and Pitchouné licked her hand.

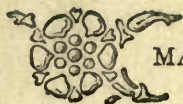
Fatou Anni screamed, dropped him, went into the house and made her ablutions. When she came out Pitchouné sat patiently before the parched corn, and he again came crawling to her.

The Arabian woman lived in the last hut of the village. She could satisfy her curiosity without shocking her neighbors. She bent down to scrutinize Pitchouné's collar. There was a sacred medal on it with sacred inscriptions which she could not read. But as soon as she had freed him



this time, Pitchouné tore himself away from her, flew out of the sacred ring and disappeared. Then he ran back, barking appealingly; he took the hem of her dress in his mouth and pulled her. He repeatedly did this and the superstitious Arabian believed herself to be called divinely. She cautiously left the door-step, her veil falling before her face, came out of the sacred ring, followed to the edge of the berry field. From there Pitchouné sped over the desert; then he stopped and looked back at her. Fatou Anni did not follow, and he returned to renew his entreaties. When she tried to touch him he escaped, keeping at a safe distance. The village began to stir. Blue and yellow garments fluttered in the streets.

“Allah Akbar,” Fatou Anni murmured, “these are days of victory, of recompense.”



She gathered her robe around her and, stately and impressively, started toward the huts of her grandsons. When she returned, eight young warriors, fully armed, accompanied her. Pitchouné sat beside the parched corn, watching the brazier and her meal. Fatou Anni pointed to the desert.

She said to the young men, "Go with this genie. There is something he wishes to show us. Allah is great. Go."

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When the Capitaine de Sabron opened his eyes in consciousness, they encountered a square of blazing blue heaven. He weakly put up his hand to shade his sight, and a cotton awning, supported by four bamboo poles, was swiftly raised over his head. He saw objects and took cognizance of them. On the floor in the low doorway of a mud hut sat three little

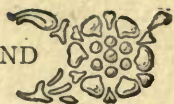
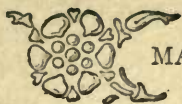


naked children covered with flies and dirt. He was the guest of Fatou Anni. These were three of her hundred great-great-grandchildren. The babies were playing with a little dog. Sabron knew the dog but could not articulate his name. By his side sat the woman to whom he owed his life. Her veil fell over her face. She was braiding straw. He looked at her intelligently. She brought him a drink of cool water in an earthen vessel, with the drops oozing from its porous sides. The hut reeked with odors which met his nostrils at every breath he drew. He asked in Arabic:

“Where am I?”

“In the hut of victory,” said Fatou Anni.

Pitchouné overheard the voice and came to Sabron’s side. His master murmured:



"Where are we, my friend?"

The dog leaped on his bed and licked his face. Fatou Anni, with a whisk of straw, swept the flies from him. A great weakness spread its wings above him and he fell asleep.

Days are all alike to those who lie in mortal sickness. The hours are intensely colorless and they slip and slip and slip into painful wakefulness, into fever, into drowsiness finally, and then into weakness.

The Capitaine de Sabron, although he had no family to speak of, did possess, unknown to the Marquise d'Esclignac, an old aunt in the provinces, and a handful of heartless cousins who were indifferent to him. Nevertheless he clung to life and in the hut of Fatou Anni fought for existence. Every time that he was conscious he struggled anew to hold to the



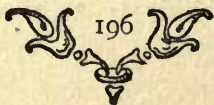
HIS LOVE STORY



thread of life. Whenever he grasped the thread he vanquished, and whenever he lost it, he went down, down.

Fatou Anni cherished him. He was a soldier who had fallen in the battle against her sons and grandsons. He was a man and a strong one, and she despised women. He was her prey and he was her reward and she cared for him; as she did so, she became maternal.

His eyes which, when he was conscious, thanked her; his thin hands that moved on the rough blue robe thrown over him, the devotion of the dog—found a responsive chord in the great-grandmother's heart. Once he smiled at one of the naked, big-bellied great-great-grandchildren. Beni Hassan, three years old, came up to Sabron with his finger in his mouth and chattered like a bird. This proved to Fatou Anni that Sabron had not the Evil Eye.





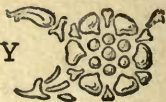
No one but the children were admitted to the hut, but the sun and the flies and the cries of the village came in without permission, and now and then, when the winds arose, he could hear the stirring of the palm trees.

Sabron was reduced to skin and bone. His nourishment was insufficient, and the absence of all decent care was slowly taking him to death. It will never be known why he did not die.

Pitchouné took to making long excursions. He would be absent for days, and in his clouded mind Sabron thought the dog was reconnoitering for him over the vast pink sea without there—which, if one could sail across as in a ship, one would sail to France, through the walls of mellow old Tarascon, to the château of good King René; one would sail as the moon sails, and through an open win-



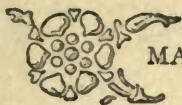
HIS LOVE STORY



dow one might hear the sound of a woman's voice singing. The song, ever illusive and irritating in its persistency, tantalized his sick ears.

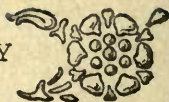
Sabron did not know that he would have found the château shut had he sailed there in the moon. It was as well that he did not know, for his wandering thought would not have known where to follow, and there was repose in thinking of the Château d'Esclignac.

It grew terribly hot. Fatou Anni, by his side, fanned him with a fan she had woven. The great-great-grandchildren on the floor in the mud fought together. They quarreled over bits of colored glass. Sabron's breath came panting. Without, he heard the cries of the warriors, the lance-bearers—he heard the cries of Fatou Anni's sons who were going out to battle. The French soldiers were in a dis-



tant part of the Sahara and Fatou Anni's grandchildren were going out to pillage and destroy. The old woman by his side cried out and beat her breast. Now and then she looked at him curiously, as if she saw death on his pale face. Now that all her sons and grandsons had gone, he was the only man left in the village, as even boys of sixteen had joined the raid. She wiped his forehead and gave him a potion that had healed her husband after his body had been pierced with arrows. It was all she could do for a captive.

Toward sundown, for the first time Sabron felt a little better, and after twenty-four hours' absence, Pitchouné whined at the hut door, but would not come in. Fatou Anni called on Allah, left her patient and went out to see what was the matter with the dog. At the door, in



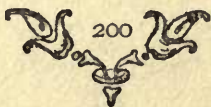
the shade of a palm, stood two Bedouins.

It was rare for the caravan to pass by Beni Medinet. The old woman's superstition foresaw danger in this visit. Her veil before her face, her gnarled old fingers held the fan with which she had been fanning Sabron. She went out to the strangers. Down by the well a group of girls in garments of blue and yellow, with earthen bottles on their heads, stood staring at Beni Medinet's unusual visitors.

"Peace be with you, Fatou Anni," said the older of the Bedouins.

"Are you a cousin or a brother that you know my name?" asked the ancient woman.

"Every one knows the name of the oldest woman in the Sahara," said Hammet Abou, "and the victorious are always brothers."





"What do you want with me?" she asked, thinking of the helplessness of the village.

Hammet Abou pointed to the hut.

"You have a white captive in there. Is he alive?"

"What is that to you, son of a dog?"

"The mother of many sons is wise," said Hammet Abou portentously, "but she does not know that this man carries the Evil Eye. His dog carries the Evil Eye for his enemies. Your people have gone to battle. Unless this man is cast out from your village, your young men, your grandsons and your sons will be destroyed."

The old woman regarded him calmly.

"I do not fear it," she said tranquilly. "We have had corn and oil in plenty. He is sacred."

For the first time she looked at his com-



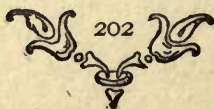


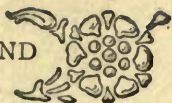
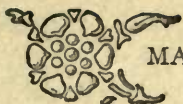
panion, tall and slender and evidently younger.

"You favor the coward Franks," she said in a high voice. "You have come to fall upon us in our desolation."

She was about to raise the peculiar wail which would have summoned to her all the women of the village. The dogs of the place had already begun to show their noses, and the villagers were drawing near the people under the palms. Now the young man began to speak swiftly in a language that she did not understand, addressing his comrade. The language was so curious that the woman, with the cry arrested on her lips, stared at him. Pointing to his companion, Hammet Abou said:

"Fatou Anni, this great lord kisses your hand. He says that he wishes he could speak your beautiful language. He does





not come from the enemy; he does not come from the French. He comes from two women of his people by whom the captive is beloved. He says that you are the mother of sons and grandsons, and that you will deliver this man up into our hands in peace."

The narrow fetid streets were beginning to fill with the figures of women, their beautifully colored robes fluttering in the light, and there were curious eager children who came running, naked save for the bangles upon their arms and ankles.

Pointing to them, Hammet Abou said to the old sage:

"See, you are only women here, Fatou Anni. Your men are twenty miles farther south. We have a caravan of fifty men all armed, Fatou Anni. They camp just there, at the edge of the oasis. They are



waiting. We come in peace, old woman; we come to take away the Evil Eye from your door; but if you anger us and rave against us, the dogs and women of your town will fall upon you and destroy every breast among you."

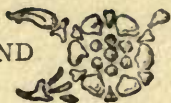
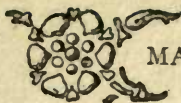
She began to beat her palms together, murmuring:

"Allah! Allah!"

"Hush," said the Bedouin fiercely, "take us to the captive, Fatou Anni."

Fatou Anni did not stir. She pulled aside the veil from her withered face, so that her great eyes looked out at the two men. She saw her predicament, but she was a subtle Oriental. Victory had been in her camp and in her village; her sons and grandsons had never been vanquished. Perhaps the dying man in the hut would bring the Evil Eye! He was dying, anyway—he would not live twenty-four





hours. She knew this, for her ninety years of life had seen many eyes close on the oasis under the hard blue skies.

To the taller of the two Bedouins she said in Arabic:

“Fatou Anni is nearly one hundred years old. She has borne twenty children, she has had fifty grandchildren; she has seen many wives, many brides and many mothers. She does not believe the sick man has the Evil Eye. She is not afraid of your fifty armed men. Fatou Anni is not afraid. Allah is great. She will not give up the Frenchman because of fear, nor will she give him up to any man. She gives him to the women of his people.”

With dignity and majesty and with great beauty of carriage, the old woman turned and walked toward her hut and the Bedouins followed her.

CHAPTER XXII

INTO THE DESERT

A WEEK after the caravan of the Duc de Tremont left Algiers, Julia Redmond came unexpectedly to the villa of Madame de la Maine at an early morning hour. Madame de la Maine saw her standing on the threshold of her bedroom door.

"*Chère* Madame," Julia said, "I am leaving to-day with a dragoman and twenty servants to go into the desert."

Madame de la Maine was still in bed. At nine o'clock she read her papers and her correspondence.

"Into the desert—alone!"

Julia, with her *cravache* in her gloved hands, smiled sweetly though she was very





INTO THE DESERT



pale. "I had not thought of going alone, Madame," she replied with charming assurance, "I *knew* you would go with me."

On a chair by her bed was a wrapper of blue silk and lace. The comtesse sprang up and then thrust her feet into her slippers and stared at Julia.

"What are you going to do in the desert?"

"Watch!"

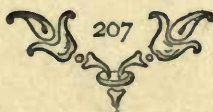
"Yes, yes!" nodded Madame de la Maine. "And your aunt?"

"Deep in a bazaar for the hospital," smiled Miss Redmond.

Madame de la Maine regarded her slender friend with admiration and envy. "Why hadn't I thought of it?" She rang for her maid.

"Because your great-grandfather was not a pioneer!" Miss Redmond answered.

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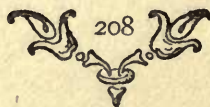
The sun which, all day long, held the desert in its burning embrace, went westward in his own brilliant caravan.

"The desert blossoms like a rose, Thérèse."

"Like a rose?" questioned Madame de la Maine.

She was sitting in the door of her tent; her white dress and her white hat gleamed like a touch of snow upon the desert's face. Julia Redmond, on a rug at her feet, and in her khaki riding-habit the color of the sand, blended with the desert as though part of it. She sat up as she spoke.

"How divine! See!" She pointed to the stretches of the Sahara before her. On every side they spread away as far as the eye could reach, suave, mellow, black, undulating finally to small hillocks with corrugated sides, as a group of little sand-





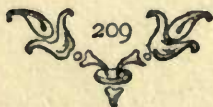
hills rose softly out of the sea-like plain.

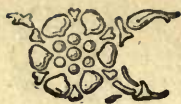
"Look, Thérèse!"

Slowly, from ocher and gold the color changed; a faint wave-like blush crept over the sands, which reddened, paled, faded, warmed again, took depth and grew intense like flame.

"The heart of a rose! *N'est-ce pas, Thérèse?*"

"I understand now what you mean," said madame. The comtesse was not a dreamer. Parisian to the tips of her fingers, elegant, fine, she had lived a conventional life. Thérèse had been taught to conceal her emotions. She had been taught that our feelings matter very little to any one but ourselves. She had been taught to go lightly, to avoid serious things. Her great-grandmother had gone lightly to the scaffold, exquisitely courteous till the last.





"I ask your pardon if I jostled you in the tumbrel," the old comtesse had said to her companion on the way to the guillotine. "The springs of the cart are poor"—and she went up smiling

In the companionship of the American girl, Thérèse de la Maine had thrown off restraint. If the Marquise d'Esclignac had felt Julia's influence, Thérèse de la Maine, being near her own age, echoed Julia's very feeling.

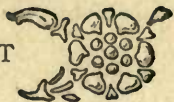
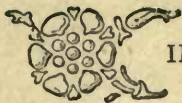
Except for their dragoman and their servants, the two women were alone in the desert.

Smiling at Julia, Madame de la Maine said: "I haven't been so far from the Rue de la Paix in my life."

"How can you speak of the Rue de la Paix, Thérèse?"

"Only to show you how completely I have left it behind."





Julia's eyes were fixed upon the limitless sands, a sea where a faint line lost itself in the red west and the horizon shut from her sight everything that she believed to be her life.

"This is the seventh day, Thérèse!"

"Already you are as brown as an Arab, Julia!"

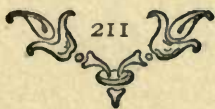
"You as well, *ma chère amie*!"

"Robert does not like dark women," said the Comtesse de la Mainé, and rubbed her cheek. "I must wear two veils."

"Look, Thérèse!"

Across the face of the desert the glow began to withdraw its curtain. The sands suffused an ineffable hue, a shell-like pink took possession, and the desert melted and then grew colder—it waned before their eyes, withered like a tea-rose.

"Like a rose!" Julia murmured, "smell





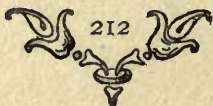
its perfume!" She lifted her head, drinking in with delight the fragrance of the sands.

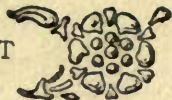
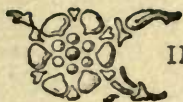
"*Ma chère* Julia," gently protested the comtesse, lifting her head, "perfume, Julia!" But she breathed with her friend, while a sweetly subtle, intoxicating odor, as of millions and millions of roses, gathered, warmed, kept, then scattered on the airs of heaven, intoxicating her.

To the left were the huddled tents of their attendants. No sooner had the sun gone down than the Arabs commenced to sing—a song that Julia had especially liked.

"Love is like a sweet perfume,
It comes, it escapes.
When it's present, it intoxicates;
When it's a memory, it brings tears.
Love is like a sweet breath,
It comes and it escapes."

The weird music filled the silence of





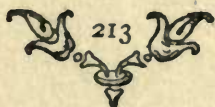
the silent place. It had the evanescent quality of the wind that brought the breath of the sand-flowers. The voices of the Arabs, not unmusical, though hoarse and appealing, cried out their love-song, and then the music turned to invocation and to prayer.

The two women listened silently as the night fell, their figures sharply outlined in the beautiful clarity of the eastern night.

Julia stood upright. In her severe riding-dress, she was as slender as a boy. She remained looking toward the horizon, immovable, patient, a silent watcher over the uncommunicative waste.

"Perhaps," she thought, "there is nothing really beyond that line, so fast blotting itself into night!—and yet I seem to see them come!"

Madame de la Maine, in the door of her



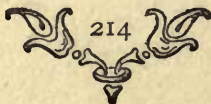


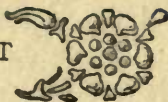
tent, immovable, her hands clasped around her knees, looked affectionately at the young girl before her. Julia was a delight to her. She was carried away by her, by her frank simplicity, and drawn to her warm and generous heart. Madame de la Maine had her own story. She wondered whether ever, for any period of her conventional life, she could have thrown everything aside and stood out with the man she loved.

Julia, standing before her, a dark slim figure in the night—isolated and alone—recalled the figurehead of a ship, its face toward heaven, pioneering the open seas.

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Julia watched, indeed. On the desert there is the brilliant day, a passionate glow, and the nightfall. They passed the nights sometimes listening for a cry that should hail an approaching caravan, some-





times hearing the wild cry of the hyenas, or of a passing vulture on his horrid flight. Otherwise, until the camp stirred with the dawn and the early prayer-call sounded "Allah! Allah! Akbar!" into the stillness, they were wrapped in complete silence.

CHAPTER XXIII

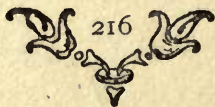
TWO LOVE STORIES

IF IT had not been for her absorbing thought of Sabron, Julia would have reveled in the desert and the new experiences. As it was, its charm and magic and the fact that he traveled over it helped her to endure the interval.

In the deep impenetrable silence she seemed to hear her future speak to her. She believed that it would either be a wonderfully happy one, or a hopelessly withered life.

"Julia, I can not ride any farther!" exclaimed the comtesse.

She was an excellent horsewoman and had ridden all her life, but her riding of late had consisted of a canter in the Bois de Boulogne at noon, and it was some-





TWO LOVE STORIES



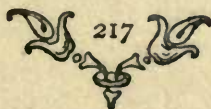
times hard to follow Julia's tireless gallops toward an ever-disappearing goal.

"Forgive me," said Miss Redmond, and brought her horse up to her friend's side.

It was the cool of the day, of the fourteenth day since Tremont had left Algiers and the seventh day of Julia's excursion. A fresh wind blew from the west, lifting their veils from their helmets and bringing the fragrance of the mimosa into whose scanty forest they had ridden. The sky paled toward sunset, and the evening star, second in glory only to the moon, hung over the west.

Although both women knew perfectly well the reason for this excursion and its importance, not one word had been spoken between them of Sabron and Tremont other than a natural interest and anxiety.

They might have been two hospital nurses awaiting their patients.





They halted their horses, looking over toward the western horizon and its mystery. "The star shines over their caravan," mused Madame de la Maine (Julia had not thought Thérèse poetical), "as though to lead them home."

Madame de la Maine turned her face and Julia saw tears in her eyes. The Frenchwoman's control was usually perfect, she treated most things with mocking gaiety. The bright softness of her eyes touched Julia.

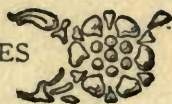
"Thérèse!" exclaimed the American girl. "It is only fourteen days!"

Madame de la Maine laughed. There was a break in her voice. "Only fourteen days," she repeated, "and any one of those days may mean death!"

She threw back her head, touched her stallion, and flew away like light, and it was Julia who first drew rein.



TWO LOVE STORIES



"Thérèse! Thérèse! We can not go any farther!"

"Lady!" said Azrael. He drew his big black horse up beside them. "We must go back to the tents."

Madame de la Maine pointed with her whip toward the horizon. "It is cruel! It ever recedes!"

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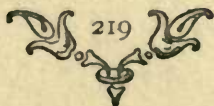
"Tell me, Julia, of Monsieur de Sabron," asked Madame de la Maine abruptly.

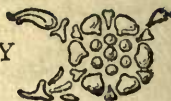
"There is nothing to tell, Thérèse."

"You don't trust me?"

"Do you think that, really?"

In the tent where Azrael served them their meal, under the ceiling of Turkish red with its Arabic characters in clear white, Julia and Madame de la Maine sat while their coffee was served them by a Syrian servant.





"A girl does not come into the Sahara and watch like a sentinel, does not suffer as you have suffered, *ma chère*, without there being something to tell."

"It is true," said Miss Redmond, "and would you be with me, Thérèse, if I did not trust you? And what do you want me to tell?" she added naively.

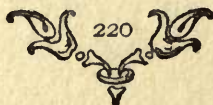
The comtesse laughed.

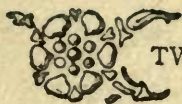
"*Vous êtes charmante, Julia!*"

"I met Monsieur de Sabron," said Julia slowly, "not many months ago in Palestine. I saw him several times, and then he went away."

"And then?" urged Madame de la Maine eagerly.

"He left his little dog, Pitchouné, with me, and Pitchouné ran after his master, to Marseilles, flinging himself into the water, and was rescued by the sailors. I wrote about it to Monsieur de Sabron,





TWO LOVE STORIES



and he answered me from the desert, the night before he went into battle."

"And that's all?" urged Madame de la Maine.

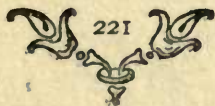
"That's all," said Miss Redmond. She drank her coffee.

"You tell a love story very badly, *ma chère*."

"Is it a love story?"

"Have you come to Africa for charity? *Voyons!*"

Julia was silent. A great reserve seemed to seize her heart, to stifle her as the poverty of her love story struck her. She sat turning her coffee-spoon between her fingers, her eyes downcast. She had very little to tell. She might never have any more to tell. Yet this was her love story. But the presence of Sabron was so real, and she saw his eyes clearly looking upon her as she had seen them often;

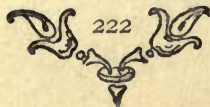




heard the sound of his voice that meant but one thing—and the words of his letter came back to her. She remembered her letter to him, rescued from the field where he had fallen. She raised her eyes to the Comtesse de la Maine, and there was an appeal in them.

The Frenchwoman leaned over and kissed Julia. She asked nothing more. She had not learned her lessons in discretion to no purpose.

At night they sat out in the moonlight, white as day, and the radiance over the sands was like the snow-flowers. Wrapped in their warm coverings, Julia and Thérèse de la Maine lay on the rugs before the door of their tent, and above their heads shone the stars so low that it seemed as though their hands could snatch them from the sky. At a little distance their servants sat around the dying





TWO LOVE STORIES



fire, and there came to them the plaintive song of Azrael, as he led their singing :

“And who can give again the love of yesterday?

Can a whirlwind replace the sand after it is scattered?

What can heal the heart that Allah has smited?

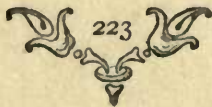
Can the mirage form again when there are no eyes to see?”

“I was married,” said Madame de la Maine, “when I was sixteen.”

Julia drew a little nearer and smiled to herself in the shadow.

This would be a real love story.

“I had just come out of the convent. We lived in an old château, older than the history of your country, *ma chère*, and I had no dot. Robert de Tremont and I used to play together in the *allées* of the park, on the terrace. When his mother brought him over, when she called on my





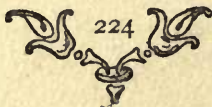
grandmother, he teased me horribly because the weeds grew between the stones of our terrace. He was very rude.

"Throughout our childhood, until I was sixteen, we teased each other and fought and quarreled."

"This is not a love-affair, Thérèse," said Miss Redmond.

"There are all kinds, *ma chère*, as there are all temperaments," said Madame de la Maine. "At Assumption—that is our great feast, Julia—the Feast of Mary—it comes in August—at Assumption, Monsieur de la Maine came to talk with my grandmother. He was forty years old, and bald—Bob and I made fun of his few hairs, like the children in the Holy Bible."

Julia put out her hand and took the hand of Madame de la Maine gently. She was getting so far from a love-affair.





TWO LOVE STORIES



"I married Monsieur de la Maine in six weeks," said Thérèse.

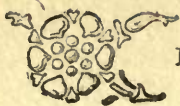
"Oh," breathed Miss Redmond, "horrible!"

Madame de la Maine pressed Julia's hand.

"When it was decided between my grandmother and the comte, I escaped at night, after they thought I had gone to bed, and I went down to the lower terrace where the weeds grew in plenty, and told Robert. Somehow, I did not expect him to make fun, although we always joked about everything until this night. It was after nine o'clock."

The comtesse swept one hand toward the desert. "A moon like this—only not like this—*ma chère*. There was never but that moon to me for many years.

"I thought at first that Bob would kill me,—he grew so white and terrible. He

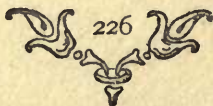


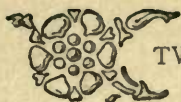
seemed suddenly to have aged ten years. I will never forget his cry as it rang out in the night. 'You will marry that old man when we love each other?' I had never known it until then.

"We were only children, but he grew suddenly old. I knew it then," said Madame de la Maine intensely, "I knew it then."

She waited for a long time. Over the face of the desert there seemed to be nothing but one veil of light. The silence grew so intense, so deep; the Arabs had stopped singing, but the heart fairly echoed, and Julia grew meditative—before her eyes the caravan she waited for seemed to come out of the moonlit mist, rocking, rocking—the camels and the huddled figures of the riders, their shadows cast upon the sand.

And now Tremont would be forever





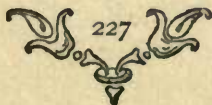
changed in her mind. A man who had suffered from his youth, a warm-hearted boy, defrauded of his early love. It seemed to her that he was a charming figure to lead Sabron.

"Thérèse," she murmured, "won't you tell me?"

"They thought I had gone to bed," said the Comtesse de la Maine, "and I went back to my room by a little staircase, seldom used, and I found myself alone, and I knew what life was and what it meant to be poor."

"But," interrupted Julia, horrified, "girls are not sold in the twentieth century."

"They are sometimes in France, my dear. Robert was only seventeen. His father laughed at him, threatened to send him to South America. We were victims."





"It was the harvest moon," continued Madame de la Maine gently, "and it shone on us every night until my wedding-day. Then the duke kept his threat and sent Robert out of France. He continued his studies in England and went into the army of Africa."

There was a silence again.

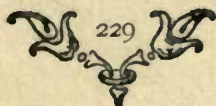
"I did not see him until last year," said Madame de la Maine, "after my husband died."

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE MEETING

UNDER the sun, under the starry nights Tremont, with his burden, journeyed toward the north. The halts were distasteful to him, and although he was forced to rest he would rather have been cursed with sleeplessness and have journeyed on and on. He rode his camel like a Bedouin; he grew brown like the Bedouins and under the hot breezes, swaying on his desert ship, he sank into dreamy, moody and melancholy reveries, like the wandering men of the Sahara, and felt himself part of the desolation, as they were.

"What will be, will be!" Hammet Abou said to him a hundred times, and





Tremont wondered: "Will Charles live to see Algiers?"

Sabron journeyed in a litter carried between six mules, and they traveled slowly, slowly. Tremont rode by the sick man's side day after day. Not once did the soldier for any length of time regain his reason. He would pass from coma to delirium, and many times Tremont thought he had ceased to breathe. Slender, emaciated under his covers, Sabron lay like the image of a soldier in wax—a wounded man carried as a votive offering to the altars of desert warfare.

At night as he lay in his bed in his tent, Tremont and Hammet Abou cooled his temples with water from the earthen bottles, where the sweet ooze stood out humid and refreshing on the damp clay. They gave him acid and cooling drinks, and now and then Sabron would smile on



THE MEETING



Tremont, calling him "*petit frère*", and Tremont heard the words with moisture in his eyes, remembering what he had said to the Marquise d'Esclignac about being Sabron's brother. Once or twice the soldier murmured a woman's name, but Tremont could not catch it, and once he said to the duke:

"Sing! Sing!"

The Frenchman obeyed docilely, humming in an agreeable barytone the snatches of song he could remember, *La Fille de Madame Angot*, *Il Trovatore*; running then into more modern opera, *La Veuve Joyeuse*. But the lines creased in Sabron's forehead indicated that the singer had not yet found the music which haunted the memory of the sick man.

"Sing!" he would repeat, fixing his hollow eyes on his companion, and Tremont complied faithfully. Finally, his own



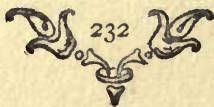
thoughts going back to early days, he hummed tunes that he and a certain little girl had sung at their games in the *allées* of an old château in the valley of the Indre.

*"Sonnez les matines
Ding—din—don,"*

and other children's melodies.

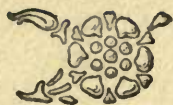
In those nights, on that desolate way, alone, in a traveling tent, at the side of a man he scarcely knew, Robert de Tremont learned serious lessons. He had been a soldier himself, but his life had been an inconsequent one. He had lived as he liked, behind him always the bitterness of an early deception. But he had been too young to break his heart at seventeen. He had lived through much since the day his father exiled him to Africa.

Thérèse had become a dream, a mem-





THE MEETING

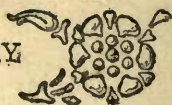


ory around which he did not always let his thoughts linger. When he had seen her again after her husband's death and found her free, he was already absorbed in the worldly life of an ambitious young man. He had not known how much he loved her until in the Villa des Bougainvilleas he had seen and contrasted her with Julia Redmond.

All the charm for him of the past returned, and he realized that, as money goes, he was poor—she was poorer.

The difficulties of the marriage made him all the more secure in his determination that nothing should separate him again from this woman.

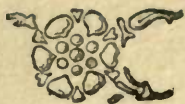
By Sabron's bed he hummed his little insignificant tunes, and his heart longed for the woman. When once or twice on the return journey they had been threatened by the engulfing sand-storm, he had



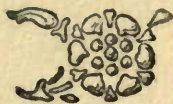
prayed not to die before he could again clasp her in his arms.

Sweet, tantalizing, exquisite with the sadness and the passion of young love, there came to him the memories of the moonlight nights on the terrace of the old château. He saw her in the pretty girlish dresses of long ago, the melancholy droop of her quivering mouth, her bare young arms, and smelled the fragrance of her hair as he kissed her. So humming his soothing melodies to the sick man, with his voice softened by his memories, he soothed Sabron.

Sabron closed his eyes, the creases in his forehead disappeared as though brushed away by a tender hand. Perhaps the sleep was due to the fact that, unconsciously, Tremont slipped into humming a tune which Miss Redmond had sung in the Villa des Bougainvilleas, and of



THE MEETING



whose English words De Tremont was quite ignorant.

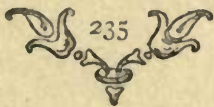
"Will he last until Algiers, Hammet Abou?"

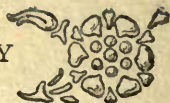
"What will be, will be, Monsieur!" Abou replied.

"He must," De Tremont answered fiercely. "He shall."

He became serious and meditative on those silent days, and his blue eyes, where the very whites were burned, began to wear the far-away mysterious look of the traveler across long distances. During the last sand-storm he stood, with the camels, round Sabron's litter, a human shade and shield, and when the storm ceased, he fell like one dead, and the Arabs pulled off his boots and put him to bed like a child.

One sundown, as they traveled into the after-glow with the East behind them,





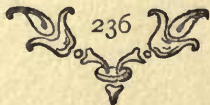
when Tremont thought he could not endure another day of the voyage, when the pallor and waxness of Sabron's face were like death itself, Hammet Abou, who rode ahead, cried out and pulled up his camel short. He waved his arm.

"A caravan, Monsieur!"

In the distance they saw the tents, like lotus leaves, scattered on the pink sands, and the dark shadows of the Arabs and the couchant beasts, and the glow of the encampment fire.

"An encampment, Monsieur!"

Tremont sighed. He drew the curtain of the litter and looked in upon Sabron, who was sleeping. His set features, the growth of his uncut beard, the long fringe of his eyes, his dark hair upon his forehead, his wan transparency—with the peace upon his face, he might have been a figure of Christ waiting for sepulture.





THE MEETING

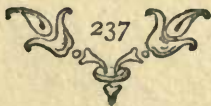


Tremont cried to him: "Sabron, *mon vieux* Charles, *réveille-toi!* We are in sight of human beings!"

But Sabron gave no sign that he heard or cared.

Throughout the journey across the desert, Pitchouné had ridden at his will and according to his taste, sometimes journeying for the entire day perched upon Tremont's camel. He sat like a little figure-head or a mascot, with ears pointed northward and his keen nose sniffing the desert air. Sometimes he would take the same position on one of the mules that carried Sabron's litter, but his favorite post was within the litter, at his master's feet. There he would lie hour after hour, with his soft eyes fixed with understanding sympathy upon Sabron's face.

He was, as he had been to Fatou Anni, a kind of fetish: the caravan adored him.





Now from his position at Sabron's feet, he crawled up and licked his master's hand.

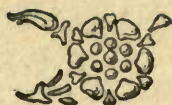
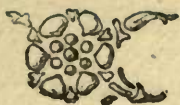
"Charles!" Tremont cried, and lifted the soldier's hand.

Sabron opened his eyes. He was sane. The glimmer of a smile touched his lips. He said Tremont's name, recognized him. "Are we home?" he asked weakly. "Is it France?"

Tremont turned and dashed away a tear.

He drew the curtains of the litter and now walked beside it, his legs feeling like cotton and his heart beating.

As they came up toward the encampment, two people rode out to meet them, two women in white riding-habits, on stallions, and as the evening breeze fluttered the veils from their helmets, they seemed to be flags of welcome.



Under his helmet Tremont was red and burned. He had a short rough growth of beard.

Thérèse de la Maine and Julia Redmond rode up. Tremont recognized them, and came forward, half staggering. He looked at Julia and smiled, and pointed with his left hand toward the litter; but he went directly up to Madame de la Maine, who sat immovable on her little stallion. Tremont seemed to gather her in his arms. He lifted her down to him.

Julia Redmond's eyes were on the litter, whose curtains were stirring in the breeze. Hammet Abou, with a profound salaam, came forward to her.

"Mademoiselle," he said respectfully, "he lives. I have kept my word."

Pitchouné sprang from the litter and ran over the sands to Julia Redmond. She dismounted from her horse alone and



HIS LOVE STORY



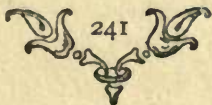
called him: "Pitchouné! Pitchouné!"
Kneeling down on the desert, she stooped
to caress him, and he crouched at her feet,
licking her hands.

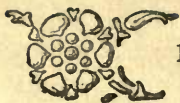
CHAPTER XXV

AS HANDSOME DOES

WHEN Sabron next opened his eyes he fancied that he was at home in his old room in Rouen, in the house where he was born, in the little room in which, as a child, dressed in his dimity night-gown, he had sat up in his bed by candle-light to learn his letters from the cookery book.

The room was snowy white. Outside the window he heard a bird sing, and near by, he heard a dog's smothered bark. Then he knew that he was not at home or a child, for with the languor and weakness came his memory. A quiet nurse in a hospital dress was sitting by his bed, and





Pitchouné rose from the foot of the bed and looked at him adoringly.

He was in a hospital in Algiers.

"Pitchouné," he murmured, not knowing the name of his other companion, "where are we, old fellow?"

The nurse replied in an agreeable Anglo-Saxon French:

"You are in a French hospital in Algiers, sir, and doing well."

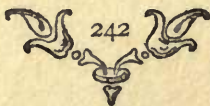
Tremont came up to him.

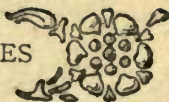
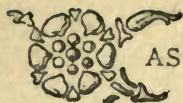
"I remember you," Sabron said. "You have been near me a dozen times lately."

"You must not talk, *mon vieux*."

"But I feel as though I must talk a great deal. Didn't you come for me into the desert?"

Tremont, healthy, vigorous, tanned, gay and cheerful, seemed good-looking to poor Sabron, who gazed up at him with touching gratitude.





"I think I remember everything. I think I shall never forget it," he said, and lifted his hand feebly. Robert de Tremont took it. "Haven't we traveled far together, Tremont?"

"Yes," nodded the other, affected, "but you must sleep now. We will talk about it over our cigars and liquors soon."

Sabron smiled faintly. His clear mind was regaining its balance, and thoughts began to sweep over it cruelly fast. He looked at his rescuer, and to him the other's radiance meant simply that he was engaged to Miss Redmond. Of course that was natural. Sabron tried to accept it and to be glad for the happiness of the man who had rescued him. But as he thought this, he wondered why he had been rescued and shut his eyes so that Tremont might not see his weakness. He said hesitatingly:



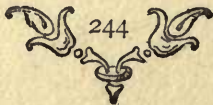
"I am haunted by a melody, a tune. Could you help me? It won't come."

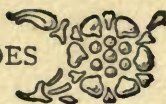
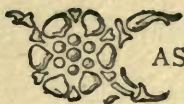
"It's not the *Marseillaise*?" asked the other, sitting down by his side and pulling Pitchouné's ears.

"Oh, no!"

"There will be singing in the ward shortly. A Red Cross nurse comes to sing to the patients. She may help you to remember."

Sabron renounced in despair. Haunting, tantalizing in his brain and illusive, the notes began and stopped, began and stopped. He wanted to ask his friend a thousand questions. How he had come to him, why he had come to him, how he knew . . . He gave it all up and dozed, and while he slept the sweet sleep of those who are to recover, he heard the sound of a woman's voice in the distance, singing, one after another, familiar melodies, and





finally he heard the *Kyrie Eleison*, and to its music Sabron again fell asleep.

The next day he received a visitor. It was not an easy matter to introduce visitors to his bedside, for Pitchouné objected. Pitchouné received the Marquise d'Esclignac with great displeasure.

"Is he a thoroughbred?" asked the Marquise d'Esclignac.

"He has behaved like one," replied the officer.

There was a silence. The Marquise d'Esclignac was wondering what her niece saw in the pale man so near still to the borders of the other world.

"You will be leaving the army, of course," she murmured, looking at him interestedly.

"Madame!" said the Capitaine de Sabron, with his blood—all that was in him—rising to his cheeks.

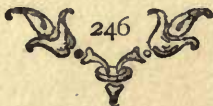


"I mean that France has done nothing for you. France did not rescue you and you may feel like seeking a more—another career."

Sabron could not reply. Her ribbons and flowers and jewels shook in his eyes like a kaleidoscope. His flush had made him more natural. In his invalid state, with his hair brushed back from his fine brow, there was something spiritual and beautiful about him. The Marquise d'Esclignac looked on a man who had been far and who had determined of his own accord to come back. She said more gently, putting her hand affectionately over his:

"Get strong, Monsieur—get well. Eat all the good things we are making for you. I dare say that the army can not spare you. It needs brave hearts."

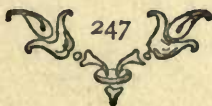
Sabron was so agitated after her depar-





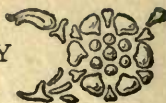
ture that the nurse said he must receive no more visits for several days, and he meditated and longed and thought and wondered, and nearly cursed the life that had brought him back to a world which must be lonely for him henceforth.

When he sat up in bed he was a shadow. He had a book to read and read a few lines of it, but he put it down as the letters blurred. He was sitting so, dreaming and wondering how true or how false it was that he had seen Julia Redmond come several times to his bedside during the early days of his illness here in the hospital. Then across his troubled mind suddenly came the words that he had heard her sing, and he tried to recall them. The Red Cross nurse who so charitably sang in the hospital came to the wards and began her mission. One after another she sang familiar songs.





HIS LOVE STORY

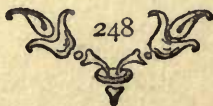


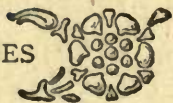
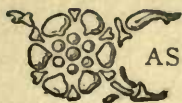
"How the poor devils must love it!" Sabron thought, and he blessed her for her charity.

How familiar was her voice! But that was only because he was so ill. But he began to wonder and to doubt, and across the distance came the notes of the tune, the melody of the song that had haunted him for many months:

"God keep you safe, my love,
All through the night;
Rest close in His encircling arms
Until the light.
My heart is with you as I kneel to pray,
Good night! God keep you in His care
always.

"Thick shadows creep like silent ghosts
About my head;
I lose myself in tender dreams,
While overhead
The moon comes stealing through the
window-bars,
A silver sickle gleaming 'mid the stars.





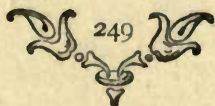
“For I, though I am far away,
 Feel safe and strong,
To trust you thus, dear love—and yet,
 The night is long.
I say with sobbing breath the old fond
 prayer,
Good night! Sweet dreams! God keep
 you everywhere!”

When she had finished singing there were tears on the soldier's cheeks and he was not ashamed. Pitchouné, who remembered the tune as well, crept up to him and laid his head on his master's hand. Sabron had just time to wipe away the tears when the Duc de Tremont came in.

“Old fellow, do you feel up to seeing Miss Redmond for a few moments?”

.

When she came in he did not know whether he most clearly saw her simple summer dress with the single jewel at her





throat, her large hat that framed her face, or the gentle lovely face all sweetness and sympathy. He believed her to be the future Duchesse de Tremont.

"Monsieur de Sabron, we are all so glad you are getting well."

"Thank you, Mademoiselle."

He seemed to look at her from a great distance, from the distance to the end of which he had so wearily been traveling. She was lovelier than he had dreamed, more rarely sweet and adorable.

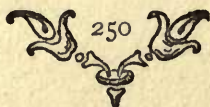
"Did you recognize the little song, Monsieur?"

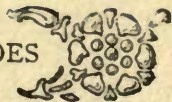
"It was good of you to sing it."

"This is not the first time I have seen you, Monsieur de Sabron. I came when you were too ill to know of it."

"Then I did not dream," said the officer simply.

He was as proud as he was poor. He

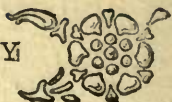
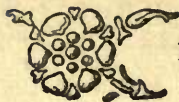




could only suppose her engaged to the Duc de Tremont. It explained her presence here. In his wildest dreams he could not suppose that she had followed him to Africa. Julia, on her part, having done an extraordinary and wonderful thing, like every brave woman, was seized with terror and a sudden cowardice. Sabron, after all, was a stranger. How could she know his feelings for her? She spent a miserable day. He was out of all danger; in a fortnight he might leave the hospital. She did not feel that she could see him again as things were. The Comtesse de la Maine had returned to Paris as soon as Tremont came in from the desert.

"*Ma tante,*" said Julia Redmond to the Marquise d'Esclignac, "can we go back to France immediately?"

"My dear Julia!" exclaimed her aunt, in surprise and delight. "Robert will be



enchanted, but he would not be able to leave his friend so soon."

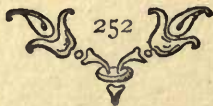
"He need not," said the girl, "nor need you leave unless you wish."

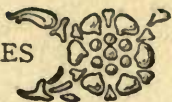
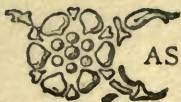
The Marquise d'Esclignac entertained a thousand thoughts. She had not studied young girls' minds for a long time. She had heard that the modern American girl was very extreme and she held her in rather light esteem. Julia Redmond she had considered to be out of the general rule. "Was it possible," she wondered, "that Julia, in comparing Tremont with the invalid, found Robert more attractive?"

"Julia," she said severely, as though her niece were a child, pointing to a chair, "sit down."

Slightly smiling, the young girl obeyed her aunt.

"My dear, I have followed your ca-





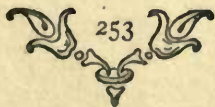
prices from France to Africa. Only by pleading heart-failure and mortal illness could I dissuade you from going into the desert with the caravan. Now, without any apparent reason, you wish to return to France."

"The reason for coming here has been accomplished, *ma tante*. Monsieur de Sabron has been found."

"And now that you have found him," said the marquise reproachfully, "and you discover that he is not all your romantic fancy imagined, you are going to run away from him. In short, you mean to throw him over."

"Throw him over, *ma tante*!" murmured the girl. "I have never had the chance. Between Monsieur de Sabron and myself there is only friendship."

"Fiddlesticks!" said the Marquise d'Esclignac impatiently. "I have no un-





derstanding of the modern young girl. She makes her own marriages and her subsequent divorces. I am your aunt, my dear, your mother's sister, and a woman of at least twenty-five years' more experience than you have."

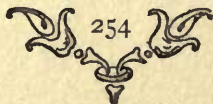
Julia was not following her aunt's train of thought, but her own. She felt the hint of authority and bondage in her aunt's tone and repeated:

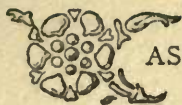
"I wish to leave Algiers to-morrow."

"You shall do so," said her aunt. "I am rejoiced to get out of the Orient. It is late to order my dresses for Trouville, but I can manage. Before we go, however, my dear, I want you to make me a promise."

"A promise, *ma tante*?" The girl's tone implied that she did not think she would give it.

"You have played the part of fate in the





life of this young man, who, I find, is a charming and brave man. Now you must stand by your guns, my dear Julia."

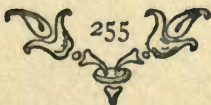
"Why, how do you mean, *ma tante*?"

"You will go to Paris and the Capitaine de Sabron will get well rapidly. He will follow you, and if it were not for Tremont, myself, your Red Cross Society and the presence here of Madame de la Maine, you would have been very much compromised. But never mind," said the Marquise d'Esclignac magnificently, "my name is sufficient protection for my niece. I am thinking solely of the poor young man."

"Of Monsieur de Sabron?"

"Of course," said the Marquise d'Esclignac tartly, "did you think I meant Robert? You have so well arranged *his* life for him, my dear."

"*Ma tante*," pleaded the girl.





The marquise was merciless.

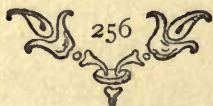
"I want you to promise me, Julia, before you sail for home, that if Sabron follows us and makes you to understand that he loves you, as he will, that you will accept him."

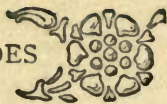
Julia Redmond looked at the Marquise d'Esclignac in astonishment. She half laughed and she half cried.

"*You* want me to promise?"

"I do," said her aunt firmly, regarding her niece through her lorgnon. "In the first place the affair is entirely unconventional and has been since we left France. It is I who should speak to the Capitaine de Sabron. You are so extremely rich that it will be a difficult matter for a poor and honorable young man. . . . Indeed, my dear, I may as well tell you that I *shall* do so when we reach home."

"Oh," said the girl, turning perfectly





pale and stepping forward toward her aunt, "if you consider such a thing I shall leave for America at once."

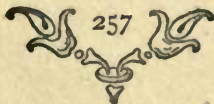
The Marquise d'Esclignac gave a petulant sigh.

"How impossible you are, Julia. Understand me, my dear, I do not want a woman of my family to be a coquette. I do not want it said that you are an American flirt—it is in bad taste and entirely misunderstood in the Faubourg St.-Germain."

The girl, bewildered by her aunt's attitude and extremely troubled by the threat of the marriage convention, said:

"Don't you understand? In this case it is peculiarly delicate. He might ask me from a sense of honor."

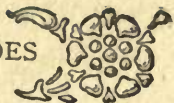
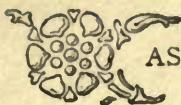
"Not in any sense," said the Marquise d'Esclignac. "It has not occurred to the poor young officer to suppose for a mo-





ment that a young woman with millions, as you are so fortunate to be, would derange herself like this to follow him. If I thought so I would not have brought you, Julia. What I have done, I have done solely for your peace of mind, my child. This young man loves you. He believes that you love him, no doubt. You have given him sufficient reason, heaven knows! Now," said her aunt emphatically, "I do not intend that you should break his heart."

It was more than likely that the Marquise d'Esclignac was looking back twenty-five years to a time, when as a rich American, she had put aside her love for a penniless soldier with an insignificant title. She remembered how she had followed his campaign. She folded her lorgnon and looked at her niece. Julia Redmond saw a cloud pass over her



aunt's tranquil face. She put her arms around her and kissed her tenderly.

"You really think then, *ma tante*, that he will come to Paris?"

"Without a doubt, my dear."

"You think he cares, *ma tante*?"

Her aunt kissed her and laughed.

"I think you will be happy to a bourgeois extent. He is a fine man."

"But do I need to *promise* you?" asked the girl. "Don't you *know*?"

"I shall be perfectly ashamed of you," said the Marquise d'Esclignac, "if you are anything but a woman of heart and decision in this matter."

Evidently she waited, and Julia Redmond, slightly bowing her lovely head in deference to the older lady who had not married her first love, said obediently:

"I promise to do as you wish, *ma tante*."

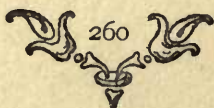


CHAPTER XXVI

CONGRATULATIONS

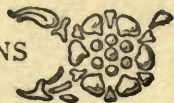
THE Duc de Tremont saw what splendid stuff the captain in the — Cavalry was made of by the young man's quick convalescence. Sabron could not understand why Robert lingered after the departure of the Marquise d'Esclignac, the Comtesse de la Maine and Miss Redmond. The presence of the young man would have been agreeable if it had not been for his jealousy and his unhappiness.

They played piquet together. Sabron, in his right mind, thinner and paler, nevertheless very much of a man, now smoked his cigarettes and ate his three meals a





CONGRATULATIONS



day. He took a walk every day and was quite fit to leave the Orient. Tremont said:

"I think, Sabron, that we can sail this week."

Sabron looked at him questioningly.

"You are going, then, too—?"

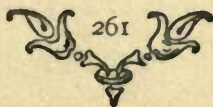
"Of course," said the young nobleman heartily. "We are going together. You know I am going to take you back in my yacht."

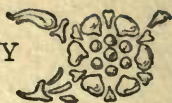
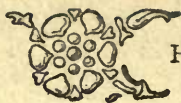
Sabron hesitated and then said:

"No, *mon vieux*, if you will excuse me I think I shall remain faithful to the old line of travel. I have an idea that I am not in yachting trim."

Tremont was not too dull to have noticed his friend's change of attitude toward him. He smoked for a few moments and then said:

"When we get back to Paris I want to





have the pleasure of introducing you to my fiancée."

Sabron dropped his cards.

"Introducing me!" he repeated. Then putting out his hand, said cordially: "I knew you were to be felicitated, old fellow."

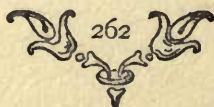
Tremont shook his hand warmly.

"Yes, and the lady is very anxious to know you. It is Madame de la Maine."

A very warm color flushed the cheeks of the invalid. He remembered all he had heard and all he had known. He congratulated his friend with sincere warmth, and after a few moments said:

"If you really want me to go back with you on the yacht, old chap—"

"I really do," said Tremont serenely. "You see, when we came on the boat we scarcely hoped to be so fortunate as to bring back the distinguished captain."





CONGRATULATIONS



Sabron smiled.

"But you have not told me yet," he said,
"why you came down."

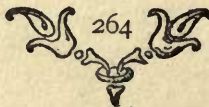
"No," said Tremont, "that is true.
Well, it will make a story for the sea."

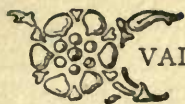
CHAPTER XXVII

VALOR IN RETROSPECT

IN the month of May, when the chest-nuts bloom in the green dells, where the delicate young foliage holds the light as in golden cups, a young man walked through one of the small *allées* of the Bois at the fashionable noon hour, a little reddish dog trotting at his heels. The young man walked with an imperceptible limp. He was thin as men are thin who have lived hard and who have overcome tremendous obstacles. He was tanned as men are browned who have come from eastern and extreme southern countries.

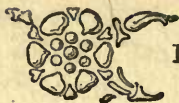
The little dog had also an imperceptible limp occasioned by a bicycle running over him when he was a puppy.





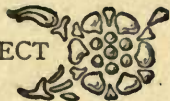
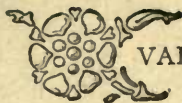
The two companions seemed immensely to enjoy the spring day. Sabron every now and then stood for a few moments looking into the green of the woods, looking at the gay passers-by, pedestrians and equestrians, enjoying to the full the repose of civilization, the beauty of his own land.

Pitchouné looked with indifference upon the many dogs. He did not stir from his master's side. When Sabron was quiet, the little animal stood at attention; he was a soldier's dog. He could have told dog stories to those insignificant worldly dogs—could have told of really thrilling adventures. His brown eyes were pathetic with their appeal of affection as they looked up at his beloved master. He had a fund of experience such as the poodles and the terriers led by their owners, could not understand. Therefore



Pitchouné was indifferent to them. Not one of those petted, ridiculous house dogs could have run for miles in the dark across an African desert, could have found the regiment and fetched relief to his master. Pitchouné was proud of it. He was very well satisfied with his career. He was still young; other deeds of valor perhaps lay before him—who can tell? At any rate, he had been shown about at the ministry of war, been very much admired, and he was a proud animal.

When Sabron spoke to him he leaped upon him and wagged his tail. After a few moments, as the two stood near the exit of an *allée* leading to one of the grand avenues, Pitchouné slowly went in front of his master and toward two ladies sitting on a bench in the gentle warmth of the May sunlight. Pitchouné, moved from his usual indifference, gave a short bark,

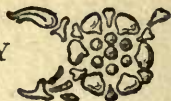


walked up to the ladies, and began to snuff about their feet. The younger lady exclaimed, and then Sabron, lifting his hat, came forward, the crimson color beating in his dark tanned cheeks.

The Marquise d'Esclignac held out both hands to the officer :

"It's nearly noon," she said, "and you don't forget that you have promised to lunch with us, do you, Monsieur le Capitaine?"

Sabron, bending over her hand, assured her that he had not forgotten. Then his eyes traveled to her companion. Miss Redmond wore a very simple dress, as was her fashion, but the young officer from Africa who had not seen her near by until now and who had only caught a glimpse of her across the opera-house, thought that he had never seen such a beautiful dress in all his life. It was made

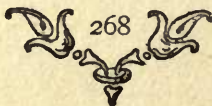


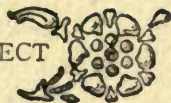
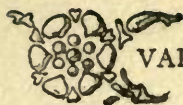
of soft gray cloth and fitted her closely, and in the lapel of her mannish little buttonhole she wore a few Parma violets. He recognized them. They had come from a bunch that he had sent her the night before. He kissed her hand, and they stood talking together, the three of them, for a few moments, Pitchouné stationing himself as a sentinel by Miss Redmond's side.

The Marquis d'Esclignac rose. The young girl rose as well, and they walked on together.

"*Mes enfants,*" said the Marquise d'Esclignac, "don't go with your usual rush, Julia. Remember that Monsieur de Sabron is not as strong as Hercules yet. I will follow you with Pitchouné."

But she spoke without knowledge of the dog. Now feeling that some unwonted happiness had suddenly burst upon the horizon that he knew, Pitchouné seemed





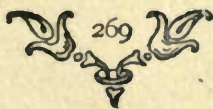
suddenly seized with a rollicking spirit such as had been his characteristic some years ago. He tore like mad down the path in front of Sabron and Miss Redmond. He whirled around like a dervish, he dashed across the road in front of automobiles, dashed back again, springing upon his master and whining at the girl's feet.

"See," said Sabron, "how happy he is."

"I should think he would be happy. He must have a knowledge of what an important animal he is. Just think! If he were a man they would give him a decoration."

And the two walked tranquilly side by side.

Pitchouné ran to the side of the road, disappeared into a little forest all shot through with light. He came back, bringing the remains of an old rubber ball lost





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there by some other dog, and laid it triumphantly in front of Miss Redmond.

“See,” said Sabron, “he brings you his trophies.”



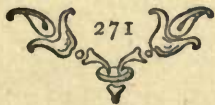
CHAPTER XXVIII

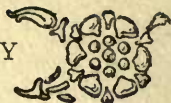
HAPPINESS

LE COMTE DE SABRON finished his dressing.

Brunet surveyed his master from the tip of his shining boots to his sleek fair head. His expressive eyes said: "Monsieur le Capitaine is looking well to-night."

Brunet had never before given his master a direct compliment. His eyes only had the habit of expressing admiration, and the manner in which he performed his duties, his devotion, were his forms of compliment. But Sabron's long illness and absence, the fact that he had been snatched from death and given back to the army again, leveled between servant and master the impassable wall of etiquette.





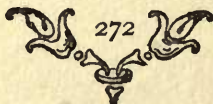
"There will be a grand dinner to-night, will there not, Monsieur le Capitaine? Doubtless Monsieur le Colonel and all the gentlemen will be there." Brunet made a comprehensive gesture as though he comprised the entire *état major*.

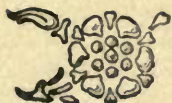
Sabron, indeed, looked well. He was thin, deeply bronzed by the exposure on the yacht, for he and Tremont before returning to France had made a long cruise. Sabron wore the look of a man who has come back from a far country and is content.

"And never shall I forget to the end of my days how Monsieur le Capitaine looked when I met the yacht at Marseilles!"

Brunet spoke reverently, as though he were chronicling sacred souvenirs.

"I said to myself, you are about to wel-



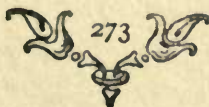


come back a hero, Brunet! Monsieur le Capitaine will be as weak as a child. But I was determined that Monsieur le Capitaine should not read my feelings, however great my emotion."

Sabron smiled. At no time in his simple life did Brunet ever conceal the most trifling emotion—his simple face revealed all his simple thoughts. Sabron said heartily: "Your control was very fine, indeed."

"Instead of seeing a sick man, Monsieur le Capitaine, a splendid-looking figure, with red cheeks and bright eyes came off the boat to the shore. I said to myself: 'Brunet, he has the air of one who comes back from a victory.' No one would have ever believed that Monsieur le Capitaine had been rescued from captivity."

Brunet's curiosity was very strong and



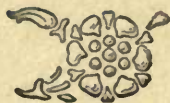
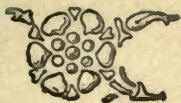


as far as his master was concerned he had been obliged to crush it down. To himself he was saying: "Monsieur le Capitaine is on the eve of some great event. When will he announce it to me? I am *sure* my master is going to be married."

Pitchouné, from a chair near by, assisted at his master's toilet, one moment holding the razor-strop between his teeth, then taking the clothes brush in his little grip. He was saying to himself: "I hope in the name of rats and cats my master is not going out without me!"

Brunet was engaged to be married to the kitchen maid of the Marquise d'Esclignac. *Ordonnances* and scullions are not able to arrange their matrimonial affairs so easily as are the upper classes.

"Monsieur le Capitaine," said the servant, his simple face raised to his master's, "I am going to be married."



Sabron wheeled around: "*Mon brave Brunet, when?*"

Brunet grinned sheepishly.

"In five years, Monsieur le Capitaine," at which the superior officer laughed heartily.

"Is she an infant, are you educating her?"

"When one is the eldest son of a widow," said Brunet with a sigh, "and the eldest of ten children—"

The clock struck the quarter. Sabron knew the story of the widow and ten children by heart.

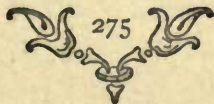
"Is the taxi at the door?"

"Yes, Monsieur le Capitaine."

Pitchouné gave a sharp bark.

"You are not invited," said his master cruelly, and went gaily out, his sword hitting against the stairs.

.





The Marquise d'Esclignac gave a brilliant little dinner to the colonel of Sabron's squadron. There were present a general or two, several men of distinction, and among the guests were the Duc de Tremont and Madame de la Maine. Sabron, when he found himself at table, looked at everything as though in a dream. Julia Redmond sat opposite him. He had sent her flowers and she wore them in her bodice. Madame de la Maine bent upon the young officer benignant eyes, the Duc de Tremont glanced at him affectionately, but Sabron was only conscious that Julia's eyes did not meet his at all.

They talked of Sabron's captivity, of the engagement in Africa, of what the army was doing, would not do, or might do, and the fact that the Duc de Tremont was to receive the decoration of the Le-



gion of Honor in July. Tremont toasted Sabron and the young officer rose to respond with flushing face. He looked affectionately at his friend who had brought him from death into life. The moment was intense, and the Marquise d'Escignac lifted her glass:

"Now, gentlemen, you must drink to the health of Pitchouné."

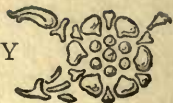
There was a murmur of laughter. Madame de la Maine turned to Sabron:

"I have had a collar made for Pitchouné; it is of African leather set with real turquoise."

Sabron bowed: "Pitchouné will be perfectly enchanted, Madame; he will wear it at your wedding."

.

Later, when the others had left them to themselves in the music-room, Sabron sat in a big chair by the open window and



Julia Redmond played to him. The day was warm. There was a smell of spring flowers in the air and the vases were filled with *girofles* and sweet peas. But Sabron smelt only the violets in Julia's girdle. Her hands gently wandered over the keys, finding the tune that Sabron longed to hear. She played the air through, and it seemed as though she were about to sing the first verse. She could not do so, nor could she speak.

Sabron rose and came over to where she sat.

There was a low chair near the piano and he took it, leaning forward, his hands clasped about his knees. It had been the life-long dream of this simple-hearted officer that one day he would speak out his soul to the woman he loved. The time had come. She sat before him in her unpretentious dress. He was not worldly



enough to know it cost a great price, nor to appreciate that she wore no jewels—nothing except the flowers he had sent. Her dark hair was clustered about her ears and her beautiful eyes lost their fire in tenderness.

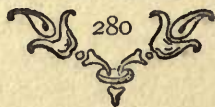
“When a man has been very close to death, Mademoiselle, he looks about for the reason of his resurrection. When he returns to the world, he looks to see what there is in this life to make it worth living. I am young—at the beginning of my career. I may have before me a long life in which, with health and friends, I may find much happiness. These things certainly have their worth to a normal man—but I can not make them real before my eyes just yet. As I look upon the world to which I have returned, I see nothing but a woman and her love. If I can not win her for my wife, if I can not

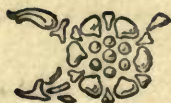


have her love—" He made an expressive gesture which more impressively than words implied how completely he laid down everything else to her love and his.

He said, not without a certain dignity :
"I am quite poor ; I have only my soldier's pay. In Normandy I own a little property. It is upon a hill and looks over the sea, with apple orchards and wheat fields. There is a house. These are my landed estates. My manhood and my love are my fortune. If you can not return my love I shall not thank Tremont for bringing me back from Africa."

The American girl listened to him with profound emotion. She discovered every second how well she understood him, and he had much to say, because it was the first time he had ever spoken to her of his love. She had put out both her hands and, looking at him fully, said simply :





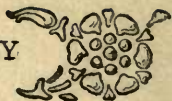
“Why it seems to me you must know how I feel—how can you help knowing how I feel?”

.

After a little he told her of Normandy, and how he had spent his childhood and boyhood in the château overlooking the wide sea, told her how he had watched the ships and used to dream of the countries beyond the horizon, and how the apple-blossoms filled the orchards in the spring. He told her how he longed to go back, and that his wandering life had made it impossible for years.

Julia whispered: “We shall go there in the spring, my friend.”

He was charming as he sat there holding her hands closely, his fine eyes bent upon her. Sabron told her things that had been deep in his heart and mind, waiting for her here so many months.



Finally, everything merged into his present life, and the beauty of what he said dazzled her like an enchanted sea. He was a soldier, a man of action, yet a dreamer. The fact that his hopes were about to be realized made him tremble, and as he talked, everything took light from this victory. Even his house in Normandy began to seem a fitting setting for the beautiful American.

"It is only a Louis XIII château; it stands very high, surrounded by orchards, which in the spring are white as snow."

"We shall go there in the spring," she whispered.

Sabron stopped speaking, his reverie was done, and he was silent as the intensity of his love for her surged over him. He lifted her delicate hands to his lips.



"It is April now," he said, and his voice shook, "it is spring now, my love."

.

At Julia's side was a slight touch. She cried: "Pitchouné!" He put his paws on her knees and looked up into her face.

"Brunet has brought him here," said Sabron, "and that means the good chap is attending to his own love-making."

Julia laid her hand on Pitchouné's head. "He will love the Normandy beach, Charles."

"He will love the forests," said Sabron; "there are rabbits there."

On the little dog's head the two hands met and clasped. "Pitchouné is the only one in the world who is not de trop," said Julia gently.

Sabron, lifting her hand again to his lips, kissed it long, looking into her eyes.



HIS LOVE STORY



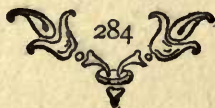
Between that great mystery of the awakening to be fulfilled, they drew near to each other—nearer.

Pitchouné sat before them, waiting. He wagged his tail and waited. No one noticed him. He gave a short bark that apparently disturbed no one.

Pitchouné had become *de trop*.

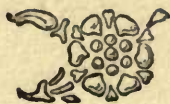
He was discreet. With sympathetic eyes he gazed on his beloved master and new mistress, then turned and quietly trotted across the room to the hearth-rug, sitting there meditatively for a few minutes blinking at the empty grate, where on the warm spring day there was no fire.

Pitchouné lay down before the fireless hearth, his head forward on his paws, his beautiful eyes still discreetly turned away from the lovers. He drew a long contented breath as dogs do before settling into repose. His thrilling adventures had come





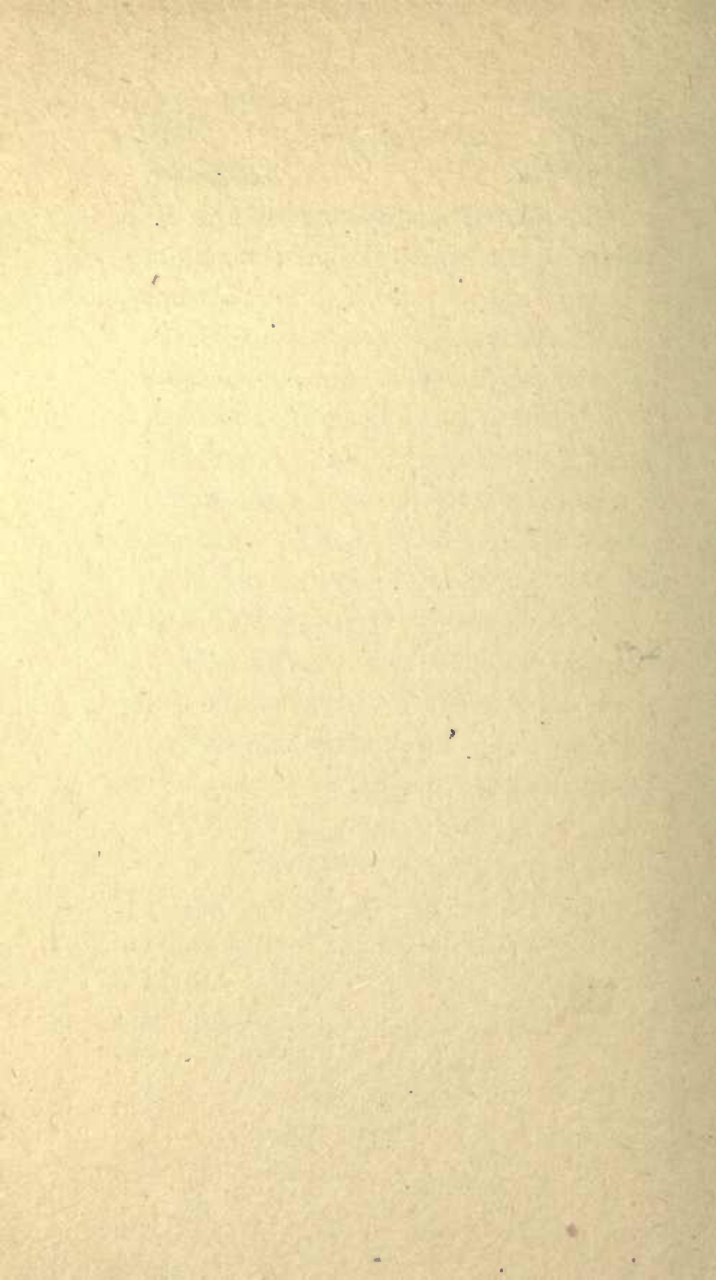
HAPPINESS



to an end. Before fires on the friendly hearth of the Louis XIII château, where hunting dogs were carved in the stone above the chimney, Pitchouné might continue to dream in the days to come. He would hunt rabbits in the still forests above the wheat fields, and live again in the firelight his great adventures on the desert, the long runs across the sands on his journey back to France.

Now he closed his eyes. As a faithful friend he rested in the atmosphere of happiness about him. He had been the sole companion of a lonely man, now he had become part of a family.

THE END



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